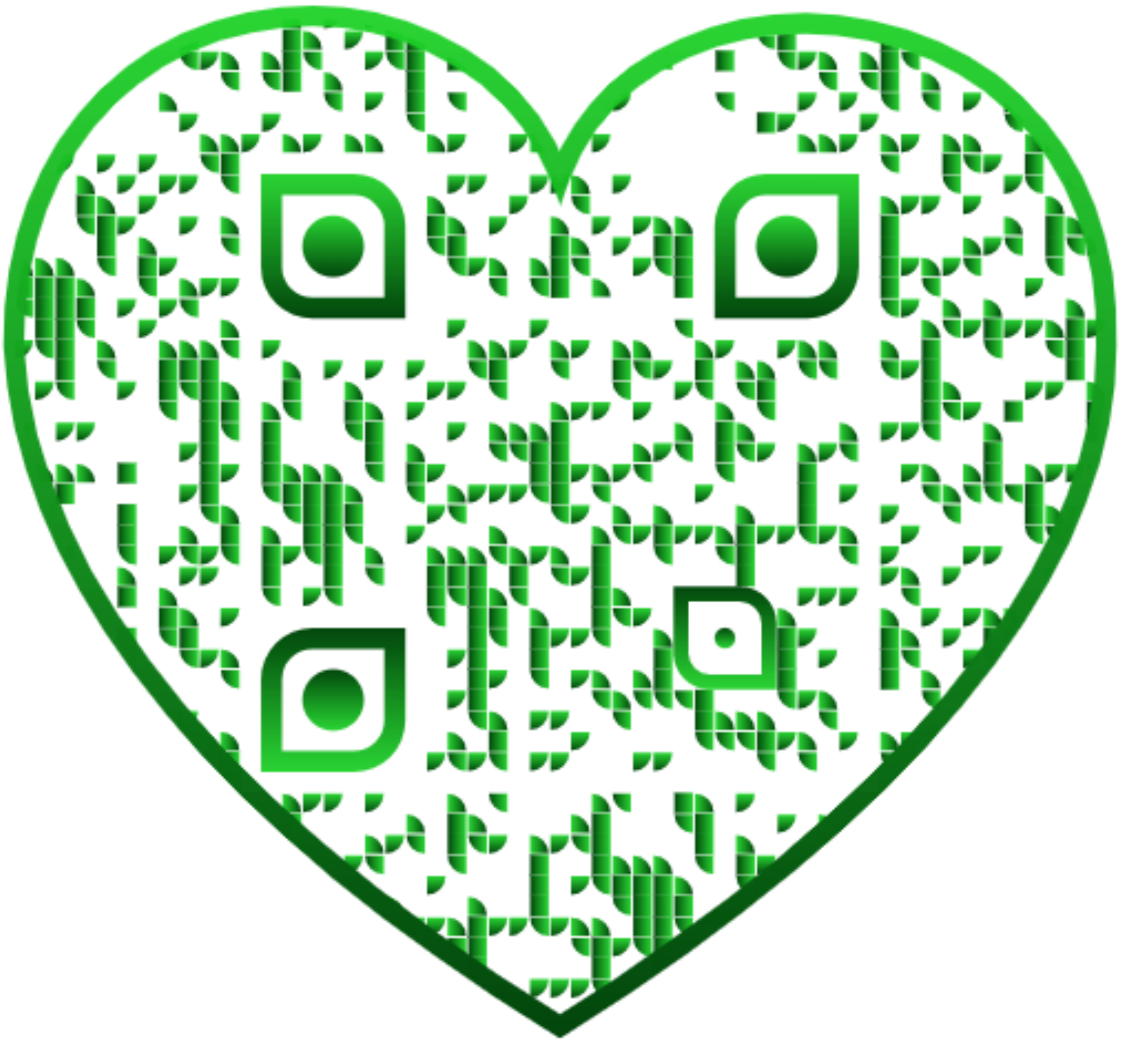
CHARLES RIVER EDITORS

ANCIENT EGYPT'S MOST FAMOUS ROYAL FAMILY

The Lives and Deaths of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and Tutankhamun



Ancient Egypt's Most Famous Royal Family: The Lives and Deaths of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and Tutankhamun

By Charles River Editors

A depiction of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their children

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Introduction

Ancient Egypt's Most Famous Royal Family

Temple of the Aten in Amarna

Africa may have given rise to the first human beings, and Egypt probably gave rise to the first great civilizations, which continue to fascinate modern societies across the globe nearly 5,000 years later. From the Library and Lighthouse of Alexandria to the Great Pyramid at Giza, the Ancient Egyptians produced several wonders of the world, revolutionized architecture and construction, created some of the world's first systems of mathematics and medicine, and established language and art that spread across the known world. With world-famous leaders like King Tut and Cleopatra, it's no wonder that today's world has so many Egyptologists.

What makes the accomplishments of the Ancient Egyptians all the more remarkable is that Egypt was historically a place of great political turbulence. Its position made it both valuable and vulnerable to tribes across the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and Ancient Egypt had no shortage of its own internecine warfare. Its most famous conquerors would come from Europe, with Alexander the Great laying the groundwork for the Hellenic Ptolemy line and the Romans extinguishing that line after defeating Cleopatra and driving her to suicide.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of ancient Egyptian civilization was its inception from the ground up, as the ancient Egyptians had no prior civilization which they could use as a template. In fact, ancient Egypt itself became a template for the civilizations that followed. The Greeks and the Romans were so impressed with Egyptian culture that they often attributed many attributes of their own culture–usually erroneously–to the Egyptians. With that said, some minor elements of ancient Egyptian culture were, indeed, passed on to later civilizations. Egyptian statuary appears to have had an initial influence on the Greek version, and the ancient Egyptian language continued long after the pharaonic period in the form of the Coptic language.

Although the Egyptians may not have passed their civilization directly on to later peoples, the key elements that comprised Egyptian civilization, including their religion, early ideas of state, and art and architecture, can be seen in other pre-modern civilizations. Indeed, since Egyptian civilization represented some fundamental human concepts, a study of their culture can be useful when trying to understand many other pre-modern cultures.

Part of the reason Egyptian history is so intriguing is because it is so enigmatic – even today, despite the wealth of written materials and countless monuments, Egyptologists constantly uncover more mysteries about ancient Egypt, even if many of those mysteries are somewhat mundane and appeal more to academics. For example, historians still debate precise chronologies of dynasties, theological nuances, and architectural details.

One such mystery that shows no signs of going away is the history of the archeological site known as Amarna, which is actually the name of the modern village that is closest to the ancient Egyptian city of Akhet-Aten. Akhet-Aten was built during the reign of one of Egypt’s most enigmatic pharaohs, Akhenaten (ruled ca. 1364-1347 BCE), and modern archaeological studies have shown it was hastily built and almost as quickly abandoned. Although the city had a brief lifespan, it was vitally important at the time, so much so that the late Eighteenth Dynasty has been named the Amarna Period by modern scholars. The importance is reflected in the changes that Akhenaten attempted to make to Egyptian religion, art, architecture, and society, all of which can be found among the ruins of Amarna, from texts that described the Aten as the one true god to the depictions of the royal family that were like nothing seen before or after in ancient Egyptian art. An examination of Akhenaten’s rule and the life of the city of Akhet-Aten has

helped modern scholars unravel some of the mysteries of the Amarna Period, but many still remain.

Akhenaten's most famous successor was Tutankhamun: he who is the living image of the god Amun, the image of rebirth, one of perfect laws, who pacifies the two lands, one who has raised the crowns, the pacifier of the gods, the god Ra is the possessor of forms; Tutankamun, Tut-mesut, Neferhepu-segerehtaui, Wetjes-khau-sehetep-netjeru, Nebkheprure. These are the names and titles of a king who died at a young age, but the mere mention of his name brings to mind visions of gold and splendor, and thoughts of a majestic kingdom. The reality of this once king is something quite different, as his fame has less to do with his position in history and nearly everything to do with the discovery of his tomb by Howard Carter in 1922.

Ancient Egypt's Most Famous Royal Family: The Lives and Deaths of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and Tutankhamun chronicles what's known and unknown about the famous pharaohs and the famous queen. Along with pictures depicting important people, places, and events, you will learn about Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and Tutankhamun like never before.

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Amenhotep IV

The Eighteenth Dynasty of the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt was a time of prosperity, growth, and military dominance, and Egyptologists have settled on the dates 1550-1292 BCE as being the era of that dynasty. Akhenaten's reign ended only 41 years before the end of the nearly 260 year dynasty, and the Eighteenth Dynasty heralded the New Kingdom period of Egypt's history.

Egyptologists refer to this period as the New Kingdom because the reigns of these rulers completely transformed the kingdom's borders and culture. The Egyptian kingdom's boundaries were stretched further than they had ever been before, and at the time same time Egyptian society flourished, with literature, architecture, art and wealth all reaching new heights. Amenhotep I, Thutmose III, Hatshepsut, Akhenaten, Tutankhamen, Ramses the Great and Sety I were some of the most powerful, influential, and controversial rulers Egypt ever had, and all of them reigned during the New Kingdom, most from the Eighteenth Dynasty. The list of Eighteenth Dynasty rulers reads as follows:

Ahmose (1550-1525)

Amenhotep I (1525-1504)

Thutmose I (1504-1492)

Thutmose II (1492-1479)

Thutmose III (1479-1425)

Hatshepsut (1473-1458)

Amenhotep II (1427-1400)

Thutmose IV (1400-1390)

Amenhotep III (1390-1352)

Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten (1352-1336)

Smenkhare (?)

Neferneferuaten (who some scholars believe was Nefertiti) (?)

Tutankhamen (1336-1327)

Ay (1327-1323)

Horemheb (1323-1295)

The Eighteenth Dynasty began with a man named Ahomse. Previous to the New Kingdom, Egypt was in an intermediate period, during which the country was not unified by a single ruler. It began with internal strife and decline, but it coalesced into a single entity following the invasion of the Hyksos, who ruled Egypt during the previous three dynasties. The following is an excerpt from Manetho's Aegyptiaca describing the invasion and rule of the Hyksos: "[F]or what cause I know not, a blast of God smote us; and unexpectedly, from the regions of the East, invaders of obscure race marched in confidence of victory against our land. By main force they easily overpowered the rulers of the land, they then burned our cities ruthlessly, razed to the ground the temples of the gods, and treated all the natives with a cruel hostility, massacring some and leading into slavery the wives and children of others. Finally, they appointed as king one of their number whose name was Salitis. He had his seat at Memphis, levying tribute from Upper and Lower Egypt, and leaving garrisons behind in the most advantageous positions. Above all, he fortified the district to the east, foreseeing that the Assyrians, as they grew stronger, would one day covet and attack his kingdom."

The Hyksos mostly controlled the northern regions of the country, using the city of Avaris as their political center, but they also retained a strong influence over the southern regions of Egypt through taxation of the ruling Theban princes. Despite what the ancient historian Manetho would have readers believe, the Hyksos were not tyrannical rulers, but during the Seventeenth Dynasty they began to appoint more and more foreign administrators, which caused unrest amongst the people. Additionally, they may have begun to impose higher taxes.

Whatever the ultimate causes, there was conflict between the Theban princes and the Hyksos. Ahmose was the last of three Seventeenth Dynasty rulers, Tao and Kamose being his predecessors, and he was responsible for freeing the Egyptian peoples form the yoke of the Hyksos. He spent his life fighting them, and it was not until the end of his reign that he succeeded in

re-unifying Egypt. With the reunification, Egypt heralded in a new dynasty, and a New Kingdom. Egypt had changed from being a brilliant but insular nation, to one with a strong standing army that was ready to expand and defend Egypt's borders. Egypt found itself interacting on a much larger diplomatic and foreign scale than it ever had before.

Statue of Ahmose I

Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty saw its capital being centralized in Thebes (modern day Luxor), with major cities and military bases spread throughout the North in the Delta region. The god Amen gained great prominence and acquired new roles as a god of fertility and warfare, and he

was soon tied in with the sun god Ra, forming the god Amen-Ra. The early rulers of the dynasty were focused strongly upon their military prowess, and they succeeded in expanding Egypt's borders in the north into the Levant, including parts of modern Syria and Israel. In the south, they pressed their interests and control over the Nubians, located in southern Egypt and northern Sudan. They were the makers of Egypt's first empire. The legendary military prowess of Thutmose I was only surpassed by that of his grandson Thutmose III, who undertook 14 campaigns in the Levant in order to subdue it. Egypt would not see its expansion surpassed until the Rameside period.

Social and cultural changes were also brought about during the New Kingdom. A new burial site was chosen for its rulers, across the banks from Thebes; first in the area around Dra Abu el-Naga, which was used by 17th dynasty princes, and then later in the Valley of the Kings. The tomb-workers' village of Deir el-Bahri is thought to have been founded by Amenhotep I, the second ruler of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and his mother Ahmose-Nefertari. Art and literature flourished under the reign of Queen Hatshepsut, who was arguably Egypt's most powerful and influential female ruler. She began her reign ostensibly as the regent of Thutmoses III, but she quickly took on kingly titles and ruled in her own right for many years until Thutmoses III decided to take control.

Not long after the reign of Thutmose III, Egypt's borders ceased expansion and focused on consolidation during the reign of Amenhotep III. Amenhotep III brought control to the region through diplomacy rather than through arms, and it is believed that Nefertiti was born during his rule. If so, it means Nefertiti lived her early life during his reign, and it was upon his death that she became Egypt's queen as the Great Wife of one of Ancient Egypt's most famous rulers, Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, Egypt's so called "heretic" king.

Statue of Akhenaten

Akhenaten has been the subject of countless academic studies and popular portrayals, as his actions and beliefs have been interpreted from a wide range of perspectives. Akhenaten has been portrayed as the world's first monotheist, an alien, an African, a homosexual, a proto-fascist, and the holder of arcane wisdom, all depending on the background of the modern writer or film director (Montserrat 2003). But after disregarding some of the more outlandish theories concerning Akhenaten's background and motivations, it becomes clear that while he was unique among Egypt's many pharaohs in some respects, he was still nonetheless a true Egyptian king. That said, he was a ruler who affected the course of Egyptian history more than most others when he entered the historical record over 100 miles south of Amarna in his father's palace in the city of Thebes.

Akhenaten was born Amenhotep, the younger son of king Amenhotep III and of queen Tiy. He was one of six or seven known children by Amenhotep III and Tiy, and his birth relegated him to a secondary position in the royal family during his early childhood. The crown prince Thutmose and the princesses Sitamen, Henut-Taneb, Isis, and Nebetah preceded his own birth.

While many of the dates of birth of Akhenaten and his siblings are not known for sure, it is clear that he was one of the youngest amongst them. A hereditary king's early life could often be easily traced in Ancient Egypt, but this was not so in the case of Akhenaten. Being born a younger son, he would have never held a position of prominence within the immediate royal family and therefore his name could not be expected to be found in inscriptions.

Conversely, his elder brother Thutmose's earlier years are documented to some degree. It is known that after Thutmose's early education, he was inured at Memphis, where he would have been expected to gain further training in the running of the Egyptian state. Memphis was the administrative capital of Ancient Egypt and the center of the cult for the god Ptah. While Thutmose was there, he was at some point granted the position of *sem* -priest of the god Ptah, a common practice among the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty and among the Rameside kings. There are a handful of inscriptions pertaining to Thutmose, some of which indicate that he was given rights over the burial of the Apis bulls in Memphis, but little else is known about Thutmose's life. This has led to speculation that he may have died young, possibly in year 30 of the reign of Amenhotep III, and he possibly may have been buried in Saqqara outside of Memphis. [1] No tomb for him has ever been discovered.

It was Thutmose's early demise that lead to Akhenaten's rise in fortunes. The only record of the transition is a small disputed graffito found in the mortuary temple of the pyramid at Meidum, which some believe recorded the crowning of Amenhotep IV in year 30 of the reign of Amenhotep III. [2] Of all the children of Amenhotep III and Tiy, the one whose name occurs the most during the reign of Amenhotep III is Sitamen. It seems to have been more common for the Eighteenth Dynasty rulers to depict their daughters rather than their sons on artifacts, but either way it's apparent that Sitamen held a position of preference. She was referred to as "the eldest daughter of the king, whom he loves", and given lands, privileges, and titles that clearly indicated she was a favored child of Amenhotep III. She even reached the rank of "Great King's Wife", though it is very doubtful that she ever outshone her mother in both power, and influence within the court and with Amenhotep III.

Their mother, queen Tiy, is one of Egypt's more famous queens, and she

had a remarkable amount of power granted upon her. The Eighteenth Dynasty was not short on powerful, influential woman, especially with Queen Hatshepsut ranked among their numbers. Hatshepsut, who reigned as regent on behalf of her step-son Thutmose III, went so far as to give herself kingly titles and to have herself depicted in the time honored visage of a king, being adorned with symbols of kingship. It seems she ruled Egypt from about 1473-1458 B.C. on her step-son's behalf, and she did so with seemingly no strain between herself and Thutmose III.

Tiy was the proudly proclaimed daughter of Thuya and Yuya, and her mother Thuya had few qualms about declaring their relationship in her tomb. Tiy would have been very young when she married Amenhotep III, around 12-13 years old, and Amenhotep III had come to Egypt's throne at a very young age. While he was still in his teens, his mother Mutemwia reigned in his stead as regent, but Mutemwia's position of dominance quickly faded when Tiy became queen. Early historians often described Tiy as being "common" or of low birth because she was not a member of the royal family, but she proved to be anything but common. Tiy's parents were clearly of the Egyptians elite class; Tiy's father held the tittles "One trusted by the Gods", "Foremost of the companions of the Kings", "Overseer of the King's horses" and "God's Father'. Amenhotep was not in the least ashamed of Tiy's

parentage; in fact, he proudly proclaimed it upon their union. The following is from an inscription found on one of the commemorative scarabs that were commissioned by Amenhotep III: “King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nebmaatre, son of Re, Amenhotep ruler of Thebes, given life, and the king’s principal wife Tiy, may she live. The name of her father is Yuya and the name of her mother is Thuya; she is the wife of a mighty king…” [3]

Statue of Tiy

Tiy has never been historically considered a great beauty, especially in comparison with her successor Nefertiti. The images that exist of Tiy depict a woman with almost severe features, noted by her pinched lips, and Tiy’s

race has often been questioned by scholars due to the inconsistent coloring found in some of the sculptures and relief images of her. In some she is depicted as a light skinned woman, but in others she is depicted with very dark skin. But this in itself might not be remarkable and could simply be a reflection of the pieces either being commissioned before or after her death, with the dark skin being representative of the green or black skin of the god Osiris. There is a bust of Tiy in the Berlin Museum that is carved from a dark wood, which has given rise to the theory that she may have been a Nubian woman, but there are no Nubian features to be found in the mummies of her parents Yuya and Thuya. Additionally, recent DNA studies have confirmed that the mummy previously identified as the "Elder Lady", which was discovered in the side chamber of KV 35 (Amenhotep II tombs), is that of queen Tiy. The DNA analysis made between the mummy, a lock of hair found in a miniature sarcophagus in the tomb of Tutankhamen bearing Tiy's name, and other previously identified mummies of the period has clearly identified the mummy as being Tiy, and of her being the daughter of Yuya and Thuya.

Tiy's power and influence rose quickly, and she was soon allocated with many prominent titles, including that of "Great King's Wife". Her name could often be found alongside that of Amenhotep III's in inscriptions, much more so than was common for a queen. She was even depicted on the same level with Amenhotep III on a colossal statue from his mortuary temple, a remarkable occurrence of great significance, because in Egyptian art the size of the figure was directly correlated with the status of the individual. By being depicted the same as the king, Tiy was depicted as his equal, something that would be seen again and further enhanced by Akhenaten and Nefertiti.

Egypt was the unparalleled power of its time, and the rulers of the Near East deferred to Egypt by sending large tribute and gifts, some of which included the sisters and daughters of the foreign monarchs, who were offered in marriage to the Egyptian king. Sons could also be sent, either out of desire to have them trained in the cultural center of the region or possibly as a form of tribute to assure the good behavior of the foreign ruler. Amenhotep III married many of the women that were offered to him in order to tighten diplomatic ties, yet he refused to allow Egyptian princesses to marry other rulers in return, which was a blatant display of Egypt's power. This is hinted at in correspondence between Amenhotep III and Kadashman-Enlil of

Babylonia when he dared request the hand of an Egyptian princess: “When I wrote to you about marrying your daughter you wrote to me saying ‘From time immemorial no daughter of the king of Egypt has been given into marriage to anyone.’ Why did you say this? You are the king and you may do as you please. If you were to give a daughter, who would say anything about it.” [4]

The Egyptians clearly saw themselves as superior to their contemporaries, and they had no need to pander to other rulers, since their army and wealth far surpassed any of their possible rivals. Amenhotep III’s ancestors had fought hard at the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty to give Egypt independence and to make the country a great power, so by the time Amenhotep III reached the throne Egypt’s power was consolidated and its great wealth could be turned to internal projects. Amenhotep III built vast monuments, like Amenhotep III’s mortuary temple, from which only two great colossi statues remain. The Egyptian court at the time was very wealthy, and that wealth was reflected in the opulence of their lifestyle. Wealth, power, and many decades of good floods and strong crops created a world of security and decadence, and it was this time period during which Akhenaten grew up,

Upon becoming king, the man who would become known as Akhenaten was known as Amenhotep IV and possibly ruled together with his father for 2-11 years (1363-1352 BCE) as a co-regent (Robins 2000, 149). Although he was named after his father, once Akhenaten became king, it was immediately clear that his rule would be quite different and that he was his own man. The textual and archaeological evidence shows that he was undoubtedly influenced by his father, but he also had his own ideas and a unique vision of how he saw the future of Egypt.

In the years since Amarna was rediscovered and interest in Akhenaten grew, the idea that the king fundamentally changed Egyptian society, or at least tried to, has been common, but while it is true that he promoted his one god above all others in Egypt and his rule was different than that of his immediate predecessors, there is no evidence that Akhenaten tried to change the nature of the state or society (Kemp 1991, 287). Those who believe that he changed the government often point out that his rulership style resembled that of a dictator more so than other pharaohs, but in reality he simply

amplified the idea of royal authority that was already inherent in Egyptian kingship (O'Connor 2004, 220). It should also be pointed out that all of the seemingly fundamental changes he made to pharaonic culture were actually quite gradual and began while he was still living in Thebes. Akhenaten approached change cautiously and conservatively, only making one major change at a time in a long-term manner (Hornung 1996, 244).

During his first five years of rule, which may have been alongside his father, Akhenaten was still known as Amenhotep IV and lived in Thebes as many of the other early Eighteenth Dynasty kings had. Although Memphis was the traditional capital of Egypt throughout most of its history, the first kings of the New Kingdom were from Thebes, and since that city was the cult center of the increasingly important god Amun, Thebes became a second capital during the Eighteenth Dynasty.

When Amenhotep IV began his reign, he made sure to continue his father's building works, and to further the theological shift that placed evermore focus upon the sun-god, in particular that of Ra-Horakty. Ra-Horakty was traditionally represented as a falcon headed man, but as Amenhotep IV placed greater and greater emphasis upon the solar aspects of the god, Ra-Harakty became known as Aten ("he who rejoices on the horizon in his name of light which is the sun disk"). The sun disk had already become familiar imagery in association with Amenhotep III, so it did not take long for Amenhotep IV to introduce a completely new divine image and for the image of the falcon headed man to become the non-anthropomorphic sun disk with rays of light streaming out from it ending in hands. Thus Aten replaced Ra-Horakty, and cults made their final shift from the dominance of the god Amun to that of the god Aten, who was the creator now.

After forming the identity of the god Aten, and Aten's new place in Egyptian theology as the "Grand Creator", Amenhotep IV strove to establish the new cult of the Aten in the traditional religious centers of Ancient Egypt, including that of Thebes. He even built a large temple complex to Aten in the main temple precinct of Thebes, but he met with little success, as the cult of Amun-Ra was still too strong there. Thus, Amenhotep IV decided to take more drastic measures, including disbanding the priesthoods of all the gods except that of Aten and re-diverting the funds from those cults to that of Aten.

Like the previous kings of his dynasty, Amenhotep IV built a temple within the temple complex of Karnak, but this temple was subsequently dismantled so the precise location is unknown. That said, extant texts from the period describe the construction: "Live the Horus: Mighty Bull, Lofty of Plumes; Favorite of the Two Goddesses; Great in Kingship in [Karnak]; Golden Horus: Wearer of Diadems in the Southern Heliopolis; King of Upper and Lower Egypt, High Priest of Harakhte-Rejoicing-in-the-Horizon, in His Name: "Heat-Which-is-in-Aten:" Neferkheprure-Wanre; Son of Re [Amunhotep, Divine Ruler of the Thebes], great in his duration, living forever and ever; [Amun]-Re, lord of heaven, ruler of eternity. First occurrence of his majesty's giving command to _____ to muster all the workmen from Elephatine to Samhudet, and the leaders of the army, in order to make a great breach for cutting out sandstone, in order to make the great sanctuary of Harakhte in his name: "Heat-Which-is-in-Aten," in Karnak." (Breasted 2001, 384)

The text in question was discovered in a quarry near Silsileh, and although it doesn't appear to be all that important, it demonstrates how the pharaoh's favored god, the Aten, figures prominently. The temple was known as the "Gempaaten" (the Temple of the Aten), but it soon became apparent that one small temple in the Karnak complex would not be enough.

The primary target of Akhenaten's fund diversion scheme was the Amun cult (Silverman 1991, 82) which was based in Thebes, and Amun's influence in the New Kingdom was ubiquitous so the move had long-lasting and far-ranging implications. There is no evidence that suggests Akhenaten's scheme was accompanied by any violence or the imprisonment of the Amun priests, but he clearly used his prerogative as the king the take resources intended for their temples. He then used those funds to construct Aten temples in Memphis, Heliopolis, Nubia, and probably somewhere in the Delta (Redford 1987, 139).

This final shift may have taken place during years 2-5 of Akhenaten's reign. During his second year in power, there was the unusual occurrence of Akhenaten's first *heb-sed* festival. This was a rather remarkable occasion due to *heb-sed* festivals traditionally being celebrated to display the king's continued virility and to confirm his ability to continue ruling. The festivals were most often held after 30 years on the throne, and every subsequent 30 years. Amenhotep III celebrated three *heb-seds* in years 30, 34, and 37. Still,

it was not unheard of for a king to bend tradition to meet his own purposes, and a *heb-sed* festival was a time of celebration and revelry for all people and could thus be used to celebrate some other event in the monarch's life, or as a political tool to appease the populace. In the case of Akhenaten, the purpose of such an early *heb-sed* may have been intended to mark the changes that were about to happen with the emergence of the Aten as the dominant deity. It may have also just as easily been intended as a royal celebration of something such as a birthday, or it may have been meant to appease the general public. Whatever the purpose behind the festival, it was an odd occurrence.

By Amenhotep IV's fifth year of rule, he apparently determined that the Aten could not shine as it needed to in the shadow of Egypt's older gods, so he decided to move north and build a new city dedicated completely to the Aten, like he was. The death of Amunhotep III may have also played a role in the king moving his operations away from Thebes, but either way, the stage was set for the king to change his name and the way in which gods would be viewed in the Nile Valley.

Amenhotep's Famous Wife

Painted limestone depicting Nefertiti and Akhenaten

Limestone relief depicting Nefertiti worshipping the Aten

In the early 20th century, over 3,000 years after her death, Nefertiti became a household name across the world and one of the most famous women of the ancient world. Egyptologists were aware that she was a queen of the New Kingdom Egypt during the later portion of the Eighteenth Dynasty, but she was little known until the presentation of a reconstructed bust depicting her at the Berlin Museum in 1924. Nefertiti means “the beautiful one has come”, and if the presented bust is anything to judge by she, was indeed a beautiful woman.

The bust of Nefertiti caused an enormous sensation following the glamorous discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922 by Howard Carter. The bust was the work of the ancient royal sculptor Thutmose and was first discovered by German archaeologists in a fragmented state in the remains of Thutmose’s workshop at Amarna. With the discovery and display of the bust, the once little known queen Nefertiti became eponymous with Egypt,

alongside that of the Great Pyramids at Giza and the Golden Funerary Mask of the young Tutankhamen. Indeed, thanks to that bust, Nefertiti's image has become immortalized and may be found in replica busts, earrings, necklaces, paintings and seemingly every other artifact that can be found at an Egyptian vendor's shop.

As it turned out, far from being an inconsequential queen, Nefertiti may have been an important wife of Akhenaten, whose reign marked the first time Egyptians practiced monotheistic beliefs by worshipping one god, the sun-disc Aten. Ironically, Akhenaten's revolutionary and influential reign has long been obscured by one of his wives and one of his sons, Tutankhamen.

Very little is known about Nefertiti's early years, or even her origins. It is not clear who her family was or even where she came from, and there are no inscriptions or letters that detail her heritage or her early life, so the details of her early life are comprised mostly of conjecture pieced together from various fragments of archaeological evidence and the historical record. Over the years historians have greatly disputed where Nefertiti came from, with two main schools of thought dividing them. The first theory holds that Nefertiti was a foreign princess, and Egyptologist Sir Flinders Petrie, one of the most eminent archaeologists of the last century, speculated that Nefertiti was the Mitannit princess Thadukhepa, sent by her father Tushratta to marry Amenhotep III. However, Amenhotep III died not long after the Mitanni princess arrived in Egypt, so she instead married Akhenaten. The presumption is that she later changed her name to a more Egyptian one, Nefertiti.

The Mitanni princess would have been of an appropriate age to be Nefertiti, and it was not unheard of for foreigners to change their names and adopt an Egyptian name. This theory is seemingly bolstered by the name Nefertiti itself, which means "the beautiful one has come", leading some historians to take the name at face value. On the other hand, other historians and scholars note that the name Nefertiti is not as unusual as first thought, and that Egyptian parents often gave their children such names with the intent of embellishing a certain trait. Thus, it is not difficult to imagine a mother wishing beauty upon her infant daughter.

The second prominent theory regarding Nefertiti's parentage and heritage posits that she may have been the daughter of Ay, who was the brother of

Queen Tiy and held a number of prominent positions under the reigns of multiple kings during his life. It likely that Ay followed in the steps of his presumed father Yuya to a military career, first as a Troop Commander and later as the "Overseer of the Kings Horses". Over the years Ay rose in power, becoming a trusted advisor to Tutankhamen, and eventually taking the throne himself for four years after the death of Tutankhamen. The titles that Ay held, like "Overseer of the King's Horses" and "God's Father", were many of the same titles that Yuya had held, and there are similarities in their names. Since Ay is a derivation of the name Yuya, it is easy to assume the names are linked, connecting them as father and son. It was very common in Ancient Egypt for a son to follow in his father's path and to take on many of the same duties and titles as his father had before him. In addition to the connection found in their names and titles, Cyril Aldred has also suggested that the two men bear a resemblance to one another, noting, "There is, moreover, a close physical resemblance between these two men: It is true that we lack the body of Ay from which to draw comparisons, but the distinctive profile of Ay has been represented in various reliefs from Amarna and shows that he had the same beaky nose, thick lips, and jaw-line as Yuya's, as revealed by the latter's mummy." [5]

Ay performing the opening of the mouth ceremony for Tutankhamen, from Tutankhamen's tomb.

In addition to these claims, there is also the connection that Ay had to Akhmim, the Ancient Egyptian town from which Yuya and Thuya hailed, and where their children would have been raised. It is in Akhmim that a temple chapel dedicated to the god Min by Ay can be found, thus providing a further connection between Ay, Yuya and Thuya. If Ay's parentage is accepted, and if he was the father of Nefertiti, that would have made Nefertiti a cousin of Akhenaten and a very respectable choice as wife and queen, perhaps even one that may have been put forth by Queen Tiy herself.

However, there is still the problem of connecting Nefertiti to Ay. The connection of the two comes through Ay's chief wife, Tey, rather than through Ay himself. Tey is believed to have been the wet-nurse of Nefertiti, and in the unfinished tomb of Tey and Ay at Akhetaten they are both shown receiving rewards of golden necklaces from King Akhenaten and Queen Nefertiti. For Tey to receive such a royal honor alongside her esteemed

husband places her in a position of importance, a position further confirmed by her titles of “Favorite of the Good God”, “Nurse of the King’s Great Wife Nefertiti”, “Nurse of the Goddess”, and “Ornament of the King”. [6] These titles clearly mark lady Tey as being the wet-nurse of Nefertiti, but it remains logical conjecture that Ay was Nefertit’s father.

What is clear is that Tey was not the mother of Nefertiti, given her claims to being the queen’s wet-nurse; after all, why would have Tey claimed to be the wet-nurse if she had the higher claim of parentage? [7] Nonetheless, there is substantial evidence that seems to confirm Nefertiti was an Egyptian, and that she was closely connected to the royal family and Egypt’s elite class. It is very simple to take the evidence one step further and to presume that the reason Tey was Nefertiti’s wet-nurse was because Nefertiti was her step-daughter, possibly the product of a previous union that had ended in the birthing of Nefertiti. It was not unusual for men to marry again, since mother and infant morality was high in Ancient Egypt even amongst the upper classes. It was also very common for women of the court to act as wet-nurses to royal children. Either way, Nefertiti would have grown up in and around the royal court of Egypt, and her position as chosen wife and Queen of Akhenaten was in no way odd or unusual.

It is believed that Nefertiti may have also had a sister who was called Mutbenret or Mutnodjmet. It is not clear whether Mutbenret was a full sister or half-sister, but she is one documented family member that appears along side Nefertiti, and she’s depicted in numerous scenes of the royal family in the tombs of the elite at Akhetaten, the capital city of the Amarna Period where Nefertiti and Akhenaten resided. She is often depicted standing prominent amongst the family rather than in the background with the other ladies, and she is also labeled as “Queen’s Sister”. [8] Mutbenret, like Nefertiti, never makes the claim of being a king’s daughter, and like her sister, her parentage is not confirmed. Her name appears in Amarna up to the birth of Nefertiti’s fourth daughter but disappears after that. The name appears again in connection with Horemheb, the successor of Ay, as his wife. She is the only known sibling, and the only known confirmed member of Nefertiti’s family.

Art from a tomb depicting Mutbenret

There is no indication of what year Nefertiti was born or which year she married Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, and therefore it is not known how old she was when they were married. However, it is relatively safe to assume that she would have been fairly young when they married, likely in her early to late teens. Confirming the date of the marriage between Nefertiti and Amenhotep IV is made even more difficult by the confusion over dating the years of Amenhotep IV's reign.

It is also believed that Amenhotep IV and Nefertiti were married early on during Amenhotep IV's reign, if not before. This would coincide with the birth of their first daughter Meritaten, who was believed to have been born around year 1 of Akhenaten's reign (circa 1356 BCE). Over the years Nefertiti bore Akhenaten 6 daughters, all within approximately ten years, including Meritaten, Meketaten, Ankhesenpaaten (also known as Ankhesenamen, the wife of Tutankhamen, her half-brother), Neferneferuaten-Tasherit, Neferneferure, and Setepenre. Nefertiti never bore Akhenaten any sons. Akhenaten's only known son was Tutankhamen, who is now believed, through DNA analysis, to have been the son of a full brother and sister. This means that Tutankhamen was not the child of Akhenaten's other well-known

wife, lady Kiya, as had been thought for many years, but that he was the child of Akhenaten and one of Akhenaten's sisters. Akhenaten had at least four sisters, any of which could technically have mothered the son, but there is no evidence that would indicate which sister may have been Tutankhamen's mother.

As is evidenced by Tutankhamen subsequent reign, Nefertiti's lack of sons was not much of an issue when it came to succession; Egyptian kings had frequently chosen an adoptive heir, usually one from the king's harem. Within the Eighteenth Dynasty alone, Thutmose I was an adoptive heir, a general in the army with no close relation to Amenhotep I, and Thutmose II and Thutmose III were both the sons of minor wives. However, while the lack of a son was not a disaster for the succession, it may have reflected poorly upon Nefertiti's status. She already was unable to claim the status of being a "King's Daughter", and now she was denied the possibility of being a "King's Mother", meaning her influence would only last as long as she retained her status as "Great Wife of the King" beside her husband. [9] As it turned out, her inability to bear a son did not end up diminishing her influence, as she continued to maintain a favored status alongside her husband and may even have held power in her own right after her husband's death.

One of the first possible records of Nefertiti comes from a private tomb in Thebes. In TT188, the tomb of the royal butler Parennefer, a lady accompanies the king as he worships the Aten. [10] The lady depicted in the scene was not named, but it is highly probable that she was Nefertiti; throughout their years together Nefertiti and Akhenaten would be frequently depicted side by side in their worship and adoration of the god Aten.

Depiction of Nefertiti offering image of the goddess Maat to the Aten

Depiction of Nefertiti offering oil to the Aten

Like Queen Tiy, Nefertiti was depicted repeatedly alongside her husband and may have even featured more prominently than he in scenes on the temple walls of not only the Temple of Aten at Akhetaten but also at Karnak. Although their monuments and images were destroyed by later rulers, the surviving pieces of talatat (the small building blocks used to construct the temples and monuments of the Amarna period) that have been catalogued from both Karnak and Amarna indicate that Nefertiti was the prevailing figure in many scenes.

A talatat of Nefertiti and Akhenaten worshipping the Aten

A talatat depicting Nefertiti in worship to the Aten

It did not take long for Nefertiti to rise to a position of great prominence, far surpassing that of Tiy. The following is a list of the titles that Nefertiti held:

iryt-p't: Hereditary Princess

wrt-hzwt: Great of Praises

nbt-im3t: Lady of Grace

bnrt-mrwt: Sweet of Love

nbt-t3wy: Lady of the Two Lands

hmt-niswt-wrt-meryt.f: Chief Wife of the King, His Beloved

hmt-niswt-wrt-meryt.f: Great King's Wife, His Beloved

hnwt-hmwt-nbwt: Lady of all Women

hnwt-Shm'w-mhw: Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt

Nfr nfrwitn Nfr.tjy.tj: Beauty of Aten, The Beautiful One has Come

Most of the titles bear a resemblance to those of previous queens, and to Tiy, such as Great King's Wife and Hereditary Princess. Others are more akin to the king's titles, like "Lady of the Two Lands" and "Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt", but they are only indicative of her position as queen and nothing more. The title Hereditary Princess is a reference to the previous queen Ahmose-Nefertari, who was the daughter of the 17th Dynasty ruler Seqenenre Tao II and queen Ahotep I, and the granddaughter of queen Tetisheri and King Sekankhtenre Ahmose Tao I. She was also the mother of Amenhotep I and the great wife of her brother, king Ahmose I, the first ruler of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Her titles included "King's Mother", "Great King's Wife", "God's Wife", "King's Daughter", "King's Sister", and "Hereditary Princess". It was Ahmose I who bestowed upon Ahmose-Nefertari the office of *Second Prophet of Amen* and the lands, goods, and administrators that went with it, and she was also made God's Wife of Amen. The endowment was placed not only upon her but upon her descendants as well, meaning the title of "Hereditary Princess" is an indication that Nefertiti may have been a descendant of Ahmose-Nefertari. However, there is little evidence other than her possible parentage by Ay to

connect her to the family line of Ahmose-Nefertari.

Despite the title of “Hereditary Princess”, there is no apparent connection between Nefertiti and Amen or the position of God’s Wife of Amen. However, this may be due to the preeminence that was given to the god Aten over that of all other gods early on in Akhenaten’s reign.

Limestone relief depicting Nefertiti in the kingly role of smiting a prisoner

Life in Amarna

Since the modern village of Amarna is off the beaten track and the classical

and biblical sources never mentioned it, it was for the most part forgotten until recently. The first true scholar to visit Amarna was Edme Jomard, one of Napoleon's French savants who documented the ancient sites in 1798 and 1799. Jomard surveyed Amarna and published his findings in *Description de l'Égypte* , which was published in 1817 (Montserrat 2003, 59). Jomard's publication coincided with the origins of the study of Egyptology and the first efforts to decipher the enigmatic hieroglyphic script. The race to understand the language was international in scope and before long the English were also heavily involved in Egyptology.

In 1824, John Gardner Wilkinson became the first English scholar to conduct a scholarly survey of Amarna when he recorded some of the tombs located in the cliffs just outside the town. He published his findings from Amarna in his 1837 work, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* , which created a surge of interest in Egyptology in Britain and North America. His book circulated for decades and found a home in many private libraries throughout England, the United States, and Canada. Wilkinson's publication also opened the floodgates of international interest in Amarna.

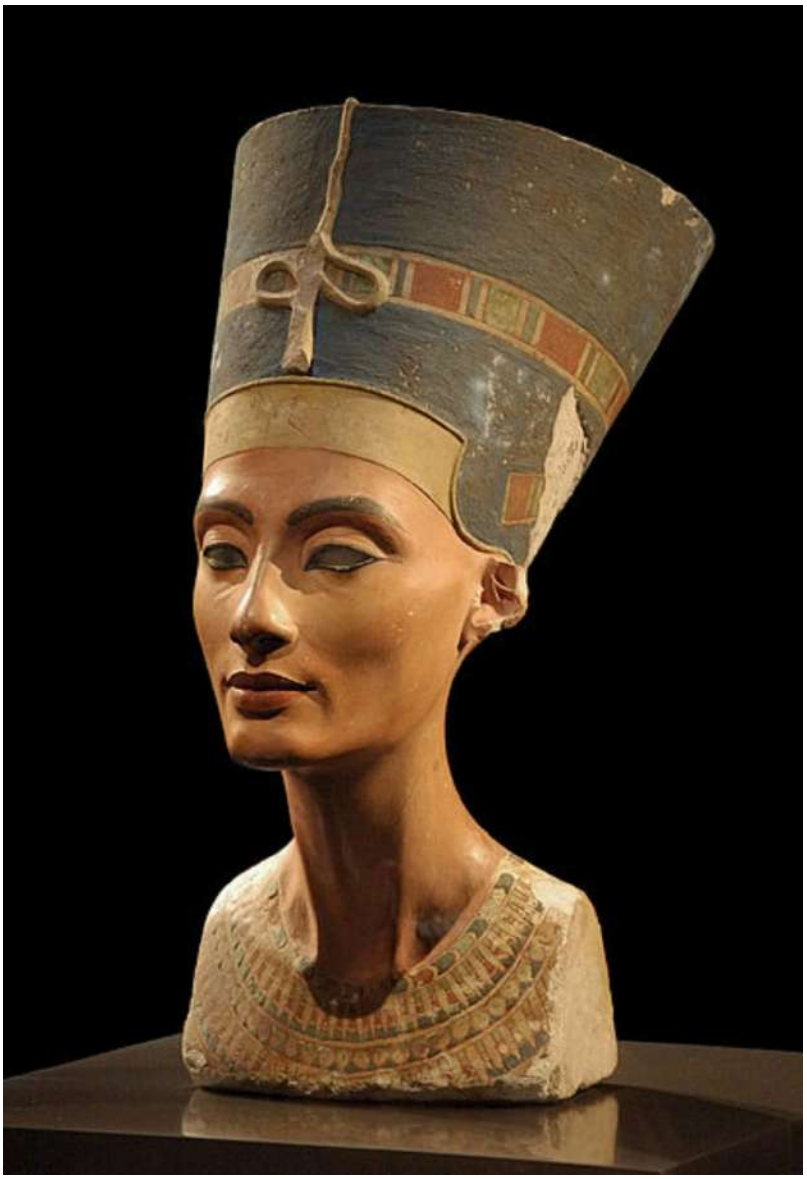
The city of Akhetaten was first explored by the Prussian Exploration Expedition of 1842-1845. It was a unique find, in that no other such Ancient Egyptian town had ever been found. Its unusual history and short occupation allowed it to help survive the ravages of time, leaving behind a shell of what once had been. The city had a linear lay out with the more important buildings lying to either side of the "Royal Road", which ran North to South through the city. At the top of this avenue was the North palace, where the royal family resided, and along the road was the Great Temple of Aten. At the southern end of the avenue was the South palace, which was an administration center. The town would have been somewhat unusual with only one religious cult, instead of at least a few other small temples or shrines to other gods. The class structure would be somewhat out of proportion as well, with the whole of the royal court, administrators, and skilled craftsmen making up a large portion of the population.

Karl Richard Lepsius was the first Egyptologist to survey the site in 1845, but it was Englishman Flinders Petrie who conducted the first truly "modern" survey and excavation of Amarna in 1891. While Amarna was undoubtedly the new religious center of Egypt, these initial Egyptologists could not conclusively determine what its administrative duties were. Memphis had

long since been the administrative capital of ancient Egypt, and while one of Akhenaten's viziers was stationed at Amarna, the other remained in Memphis, which implies that Memphis was still functioning as an administrative center. During the Saite Period, the reigns of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty kings offer a possible parallel. They set up their capital in the city of Sias, but Memphis remained an administrative center. Memphis did not lose its position as such until the advent of Alexander the Great, and his creation of the city of Alexandria, which soon became the religious, cultural, and political center of the country. Thus, while administrative duties were probably seen to at Amarna, the administration of the whole of Egypt was still being overseen from Memphis.

Amarna was a city that was purposefully built for its ruler to focus attention on the worship of the god Aten, so it was not a city that grew and developed over time, but it must have been nothing short of remarkable. During what is today termed the Amarna Period, much of what is known about life at that time comes from three main sources. The first source is art, including stelae, non-royal tombs, royal tombs, sculptures, etc. The second source is a set of documents, known as the Amarna tablets, and the third source is archaeological data.

Much of the art was found in the tombs near the city, which contained the remains of Akhetaten's elite inhabitants. The art includes multiple depictions of life in Akhetaten, like scenes of the king racing chariots from the North royal palace down to the southern administration palace. Other scenes depict the king rewarding and appointing his officials, not from a throne room but from a balcony of the Southern palace. In other depictions the temple of Aten is a feature. Small shrines from private homes could be found with images of the royal family, including one that shows the king and queen playing with their young daughters.



The famous bust of Nefertiti

By the time Petrie became an Egyptologist, the two most popular theories concerning Akhenaten's life were that he was either a mystical vessel of esoteric wisdom (Montserrat 2003, 124-37) or the world's first monotheist (Montserrat 2003, 120-3). These two views represented popular movements of the era, as theosophy was popular among many elites and Victorian Era Christians looked for archaeological proof of the Bible. Petrie, of course, fell into the second category, so he was naturally drawn to Amarna and Akhenaten.

In the 1891-1892 season, Petrie began what was perhaps his most popular

dig, and to say that he was excited about working at Amarna would be an understatement. He finally got to uncover the city of the king whom he believed to be the world's first monotheist and "the most original thinker that ever lived in Egypt, and one of the greatest idealists of the world" (Drower 1995, 198). Everything about the site of Amarna/Akhetaten seemed to point to the king as the original thinker Petrie believed him to be, as the city was isolated and off the beaten track and the nearby tombs were on the east bank of the Nile instead of the standard west bank.

After a careful survey of the area, Petrie went to work with his crew and discovered the enigmatic king's palace. Although later archaeologists would work at the site for longer periods of time than Petrie, he was the first to truly "open" the site (Drower 1995, 191). As Petrie worked to uncover the secrets of Egypt's most enigmatic king, he could not escape the crowds of curious onlookers. Petrie's discovery of Akhenaten's palace attracted scores of Westerners who had heard about the find. Ever the polite English gentleman, Petrie took the time to speak with all visitors who wished to talk to him, especially the wealthy patrons who were at least partially funding the dig (Montserrat 2003, 88).

Although the existence of Amarna had been known since the early 19th century, the discovery of the so-called "Amarna Letters" brought a new wave of interest to the lost city. The Amarna Letters were made up of 380 cuneiform tablets of correspondence between the kings of Egypt, Babylon, Hatti, Assyria, and Mittani, which were the "Great Powers," and the lesser Canaanite city-states of the Levant during the Late Bronze Age. It soon became clear that the tablets formed part of a state administrative archive. The archive mostly consists of correspondence between the rulers and diplomats of the Near East nations, including those of Babylonia, Assyria, Hitti, Mitanni, Syria, Canaan, and Ancient Egypt during the reigns of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten. They have become a primary source to historians for establishing the timeline of the early New Kingdom period of Ancient Egypt, and of gaining a greater understanding of the international diplomatic and administrative framework of the period.

Many scholars of the era, including Petrie, believed the letters confirmed many aspects of the Old Testament. Petrie saw the discovery of the Amarna Letters as a good way to help his career as well as promote Amarna's public

profile in particular and Egyptology in general. He wrote several essays about Amarna in popular publications, many of which were religious in nature, where he had more freedom to promote his ideas about Biblical history (Montserrat 2003, 66).

Using archaeological methods that he developed and that are still used by archaeologists today, Petrie was able to uncover the foundations of most of the major temples and palaces of the site (Montserrat 2003, 66-69). Although Petrie's time at Amarna was limited, his work provided a sound basis for later studies of the site, such as Norman de Garis Davies who led digs for the Egypt Exploration Society from 1901 through 1906. Davies' work focused on the tombs outside the village which he published in 1906 in *The Rock Tombs of Amarna* (Montserrat 2003, 70).

Even more important than the new pedagogical philosophies introduced to Egyptology by Petrie was his system of excavation. When one looks at Petrie's system of excavation, it seems quite logical and self-evident, but in the decades prior, excavation was often chaotic and destructive. Many 19th century archeologists worked on commission, and since museums usually only paid for larger, more impressive pieces, many sites were damaged to obtain a few pieces as a result (Jeffreys 2011, 3-4). By the time Petrie got into archaeology, there were, thankfully, more restraints in place, but many still used destructive archaeological techniques.

Petrie's simple yet effective method involved first finding a location where he believed there to be a significant discovery waiting to be found, and he clearly had an uncanny talent for finding such places. Once he had decided on an excavation site and permits were in hand, he inspected the surface and sent in "basket boys" to clear the surface of debris. When pottery was found, the *quftis* (natives with archaeological experience) would take over with brushes and knives. The head *qufti* cleared away the remainder of the debris, allowing Petrie to draw or photograph everything discovered *in situ* before it was taken from the pit (Drower 1995, 216). This technique has been emulated by archaeologists from around the world in different disciplines and is still used to an extent today.

While Petrie was far from arrogant, he knew that his system of archeology was better than any other, so he published his techniques in the 1903 book *Methods and Aims in Archaeology* . The title is still read today and is

required reading for anyone considering a profession in archaeology (Drower 1995, 277). Besides outlining his system, Petrie described some of the traits a good archaeologist should possess, including a strong sense of history, good organizational skills, a keen memory, and at least a minimal background in engineering (Drower 1995, 278). As Petrie continued on his career in archaeology, he further developed his techniques, combining them with emerging technologies.

With that said, there is no doubt that Petrie constantly did things his own way, which sometimes aroused scoffing and maybe a little contempt from his contemporaries. One of the things many Egyptologists found curious about Petrie was his insistence on not only excavating pottery and pottery shards but meticulously cataloging each piece, while the early second generation of Egyptologists was still very much influenced by the "bigger is better" theory adhered to by the first generation. Statues and other sizable monuments were seen as the most valuable pieces to be excavated, with smaller pieces such as *ushabtis* and other funerary artifacts coming in second. Pottery was ignored for the most part, especially when broken, but Petrie was more interested in uncovering the truths of ancient Egyptian history than he was in selling pieces to museums or making a name for himself. He knew that properly categorized pottery was the key to unlocking Egypt's often confusing chronology.

Petrie understood that pottery styles changed according to periods and could thus be used to date archaeological sites. While he was excavating the pre-dynastic site of Naqada in 1899, Petrie developed a chronological series of the pottery he discovered, even as he was unable to assign definitive dates (Drower 1995, 251-2). Petrie’s system of dating sites using pottery was further developed in later decades and eventually used by archaeologists outside of the English-speaking world and the discipline of Egyptology. The system is now known as “seriation.” In Cambridge, it is often referred to as the “Petrie Matrix” or “Petriefication” (Drower 1995, 252).

A picture of pottery from the Pre-Dynastic period recognizable for the black tops

Petrie was also far ahead of his time with respect to other techniques he used in the fields of archaeology and Egyptology. He was one of the first archaeologists to use X-rays to examine delicate objects such as mummies (Jeffreys 2011, 6). The X-ray examination of mummies (especially small animals) is quite common, not only in Egyptology but in other sub-disciplines of archaeology.

German Egyptologists returned to Amarna in the early 20th century, as Ludwig Borchardt led a German team that used some of Petrie's methods and more systematically excavated the site in the years just before World War I. In addition to getting a better picture of the size and scope of ancient city, Borchardt discovered the now famous Nefertiti bust in 1912 (Montserrat 2003, 72). The majority of the work at Amarna was done by the British after World War I, but all work at the site ceased from 1937-1977. After 1977, Barry Kemp led excavations at Amarna (Montserrat 2003, 91-93).

What was uncovered indicates that somewhat suddenly, during the fifth year of his rule Akhenaten pulled up stakes in Thebes and began construction of his new city, Akhet-Aten, which is translated as "Horizon of the Aten"

(Kemp 1991, 266-7). Amenhotep IV also changed his name to reflect his religious philosophy - no longer would he be known as Amunhotep in official texts ("Amun is at peace") but instead as Akhenaten ("He who is useful to the Aten"). The Aten was the disk of the sun and was depicted as such in all subsequent artistic representations in ancient Egyptian art.

Theology probably played a role in Akhenaten's choice of a location for his new capital. Although there is no extant text that explains why the king chose the specific location for his new city, there are two probable reasons. The first was to start over in a new location far from the priests of the old religion; after all, if Akhenaten was truly attempting to develop a new religious philosophy that he needed complete control over, he would need to be far removed from the influence of the Amun priests. The second reason for the specific location may have had to do with a gap in the hills south of Amarna that has the appearance of the hieroglyph for the word *akhet* ("horizon"), when the sun rises above it (Aldred 2001, 269).

If Akhenaten was looking for isolation and privacy for his new city, he certainly picked a good location. Amarna is located about halfway between Memphis and Thebes with no other ancient sites nearby (Kemp 1991, 267). Like most ancient Egyptian cities, Akhet-Aten was built near the banks of the Nile River, specifically on the east bank, and based on scenes from the walls of the tombs from Amarna, it appears that the course of the Nile River near Akhet-Aten was about the same during Akhenaten's time as it is today (Kemp 1991, 267). The fairly isolated location of the city meant that it was free from the unwanted influences from Thebes, but it was still connected to the rest of Egypt and the larger world by river access, which was necessary to transport the materials, supplies, and people needed to build the new city. Modern archaeologists have determined that ancient Amarna was built in a short period of time and at its height was home to 20,000-50,000 people (Kemp 1991, 267-9). In antiquity, that would have made it a city of considerable size.

The workers used the same building methods for the most part to construct Amarna, with one notable exception. Instead of using large stone blocks, commonly used to build temples and palaces but requiring a fair amount of manpower and sleds to move the blocks, the workers at Amarna used what are known as *talatat* blocks. Talatat blocks were significantly smaller than the blocks usually used in ancient Egypt for construction, but since they were

only 55 x 25 centimeters, workers could carry them, therefore allowing the city to be built more quickly (Dijk 2000, 282). Inevitably, the quality of the finished product was not what it was compared to those that used traditional blocks, but Akhenaten was more concerned with finishing his new city. He wanted to worship the Aten with no other gods in the vicinity, so the long-term durability of the buildings was not an issue.

Once the construction of the city was completed, Akhenaten had two boundary stelae erected to mark the limits of the city, one in the north and one in the south. A boundary stela is an inscription on a stone block, generally called a "stela" (plural stelae), which relates the limits of either a kingdom or in this case a city. Boundary stelae always stated what king had the monument erected, what year it was built, and often some details such as why the boundary was established. The southern stela was later replaced, and today only about a third of the replacement is extant (Murnane 1995, 73).

The text is significant because it explicitly stated that the city would be the new cult center of the Aten: "Since he casts them on me, in life and dominion continually forever, I shall make Akhet- Aten for the Aten, my father, in this place. I shall not make Akhet-Aten for him south of it, north of it, west of it (or) east of it. I shall not go past the southern stela of Akhet-Aten toward the south, nor shall I go past the northern stela of Akhet -Aten downstream, in order to make Akhet-Aten for him there. Nor shall I make <it> for him on the western side of Akhet-Aten; but I shall make Akhet-Aten for the Aten, my father, on the orient (side) of Akhet-Aten – the place which he himself made to be enclosed for him by the mountain, on which he may achieve happiness and on which I shall offer to him. This is it!" (Murnane 1995, 76-77).

Akhenaten also made it very clear that he is the only one with the answer when it comes to building the new city and worshipping the Aten: "Nor shall the King's Chief Wife say to me, 'Look, there's a nice place for Akhet-Aten someplace else,' nor shall I listen to her. Nor shall any officials in my presence – be they officials of favor or officials of the outside, or the chamberlains, or any people in the entire land – say to me, 'Look, there's a nice place for Akhet-Aten someplace else,' nor shall I listen to them – whether it (=that other place) be downstream, whether it be in the south, in the west or in the orient. I will not say, 'I shall abandon Akhet-Aten so that I may hasten and make Akhet-Aten in this other nice place [. . .] together with

it forever': but [I will remain] in this Akhet-Aten, with which he himself has wished to be satisfied forever and ever." (Murnane 1995, 77).

Akhenaten truly had all the control in the new capital, from what god was worshipped to the layout of the city. Due to the passage of time, most ancient Egyptian cities are now far below modern cities and will never be completely uncovered, but since Amarna is such a small village and was built just outside the site of ancient Akhet-Aten, the complete structure of the city has been accurately blueprinted by modern scholars. The city was built along a north-south axis that roughly followed the river, and the primary cluster of economic and religious activity would have taken place in what modern scholars refer to as the Central City. As the name indicates, the Central City was located geographically in the center of Akhet-Aten, but it was also in the spiritual center of the capital. Both the Great and Small Aten temples were located in the Central City along with one of the king's homes. Other important government offices were also located in the Central City, including the record's office, a military post, and the city's primary bakery, making it a central business district. Thus, the Central City would have been the hub of activity and full of people on any given day, and priests, peasants, soldiers, and nobles all would have rubbed shoulders as they conducted their daily affairs in the Central City. A north-south "royal road" connected the central area to the housing and tombs north and south (Kemp 1991, 271).

A cluster of housing just to the north of the Central City is known as the North Suburb. The city's workers and their families, which included the tomb builders, would have lived in this neighborhood. Just north of the North Suburb was the North Riverside Palace, which was the primary residence of the king. The palace was part of another residential area known as the North City, and to the north of that neighborhood were the north tombs (Kemp 1991, 271). All of this ensured that the city would have been a very ideal, orderly, and efficient place for Akhenaten.

The more recent excavations by Barry Kemp at Amarna have revealed that the North City was by far the most important residential neighborhood and the most sought after real estate in Akhet-Aten. Anyone who was anyone during the Amarna Period had a place in the North City near the king and his family. The North Riverside Palace, which was the primary residence of Akhenaten, was protected by a massive fortified wall staffed with plenty of bodyguards. The nearby homes were occupied by the king's closest advisors

and their families, which would have included scribes, priests, and officers in the military (Kemp 1991, 276). Akhenaten would have conducted his business at this residence, and it was also from here that he began the royal processions frequently documented in many of the tombs at Amarna. He would have left from his palace with a full military escort and traveled south along the road until reaching the Aten temples (Kemp 1991, 289).

As Akhenaten traveled south in his chariot, he would have passed by another royal residence when he was between the North City and North Suburb. Often known as the North Palace, it is believed this was the home of Meritaten, Akhenaten's oldest daughter (Kemp 1991, 279). The level of activity at this residence would have been far less, but since she was a member of the royal family and was often depicted in the art from the period, it was no doubt also an important location. Some royal business would have been conducted at the residence and the princess no doubt would have had an entourage of sycophants following her in the hope that they could get access to the king.

After slowly rolling by Meritaten's palace, Akhenaten then would have entered the Central City, and the royal road terminated at what scholars call the "Great Palace." The Great Palace was another living space for Akhenaten, but one that appears to have been more invested with the religious ideology he was attempting to promote, as it was close to the Aten temples and included architectural elements that were indictive of his unique reign. The palace contained courts, halls, and a large courtyard surrounded by colossal statues of none other than the king himself (Kemp 1991, 279). The presence of the large statues may at first seem to indicate a touch of megalomania, but it is important to remember that most Egyptian kings had similar statues made of themselves.

The Great Palace was probably the location where Akhenaten received foreign guests to receive tribute and make treaties and alliances. He no doubt would have wanted to impress his foreign guests with an ostentatious display, and he surely wanted them to see the nearby temples to the Aten. A brick bridge connected the Great Palace to the living quarters where the king stayed when he was in the Central City (Kemp 1991, 281).

Next to the Great Palace were perhaps the two most important buildings, the Great and Small Aten temples. Both temples resembled the typical

rectangular New Kingdom style of temples in many ways, but with one notable difference. Two large pylons marked the entrance to the Great Aten Temple, which was characteristic of most temples of the time, but between the Aten temples at Amarna was a columned hall followed by a series of open courts with large offering tables. In all other New Kingdom temples, the open space came after the pylons (Kemp 1991, 281).

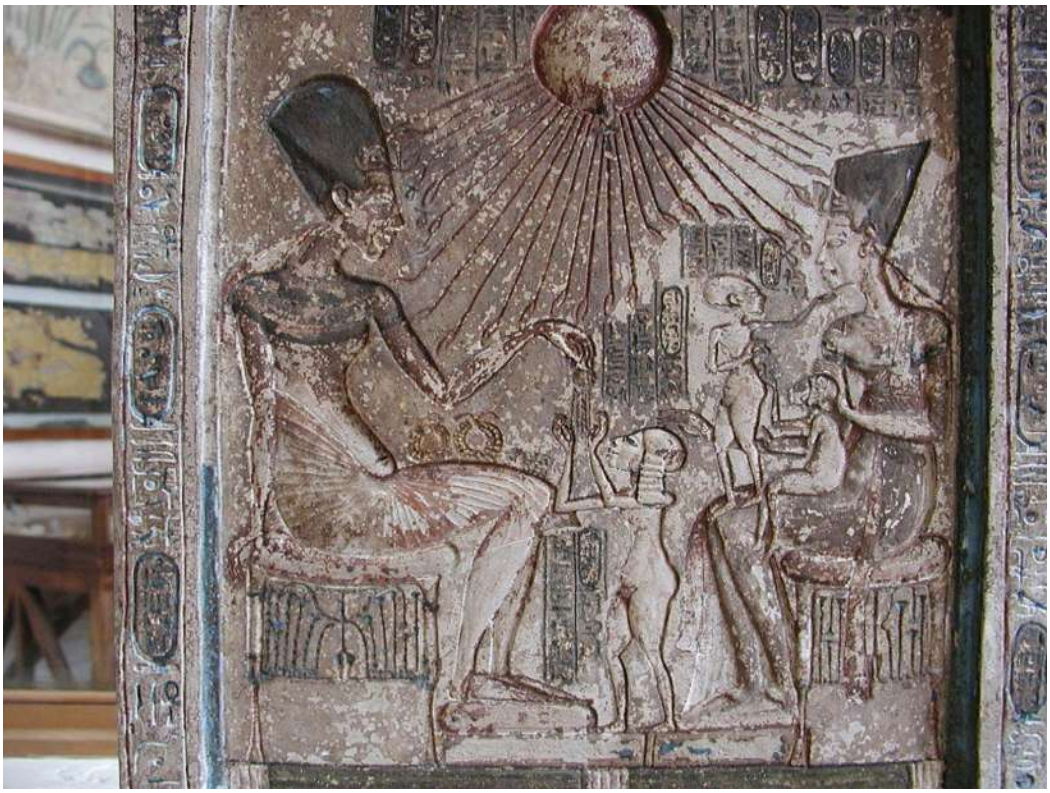
The Small Aten Temple was built in the same style and structure as the Great Aten Temple, just with smaller dimensions. It is believed that the Small Aten Temple is where most of Akhenaten's semi-public worship took place (Kemp 1991, 283). As the king and the primary proponent of Aten worship, Akhenaten would have been the high priest of his religion and no doubt performed religious ceremonies at both temples.

It can be assumed that the rituals regarding the Aten were similar to those done for other ancient Egyptian gods. There was no chapel in the back of the temple for a cult image of the god, but that would be actually in line with the theology of the Aten and also with Egyptian solar theology in general. Temples dedicated to other Egyptian sun gods, such as Atum and Re, were also without a chapel or cult image (Morenz 1992, 86), so although this was a contrast to Amun worship, it was not truly revolutionary or new in terms of Egyptian religion in general.

Most of the primary source of information that helps modern scholars paint a more complete picture about life in ancient Amarna and the theology behind the Aten cult come from the tombs north and south of the city. Almost immediately, visitors may notice a major difference between the tombs at Amarna and those from all other ancient Egyptian necropolises: the Amarna tombs are located on the east bank of the Nile River. All of the other major necropolises and tomb sites in ancient Egypt, including the Valley of the Kings, Saqqara, Giza, and Abydos, were built on the west bank of the Nile River. The reason for the location was theologically obvious: the sun rose in the east and set in the west. As such, Osiris, the god of the dead, was often referred to as the "Lord of the West." The reason why Akhenaten chose to abandon this Egyptian tradition is not clear since the king never stated so in any text, but it probably is related to his newfound theology, particularly that the Aten was omnipresent

Images of Akhenaten and his family dominate the pictorial reliefs of many

of the tombs, which is demonstrative of one of the major changes in the period (Dijk 2000, 284). In nobles' tombs from other periods of ancient Egyptian history, and even from the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty, the king is often depicted, but in a much different manner. Usually the king is shown enthroned or possibly with one or more of the deities, but in the Amarna tombs Akhenaten is usually shown seated with his wife and daughters. The seemingly more "naturalistic" depiction of the king is truly important and fascinating, but a closer look at some more of the reliefs tells the story of how Akhenaten built his power base.



Limestone reliefs depicting Akhenaten, Nefertiti and three of their daughters with the Aten represented as beams of light

Some of the earlier modern interpretations of Akhenaten saw him as an idealist who spent most of his time contemplating the essence of the Aten and the nature of life. The Akhenaten of these interpretations had little time for the mundane and was thought to be far removed from the politics that are inherent in any government. However, a look at some of the reliefs from the nobles' tombs at Amarna shows that Akhenaten was very cognizant of who his allies were and was more than willing to reward them with tangible gifts. Many of these tombs show Akhenaten plying the tomb owner with gold and jewels, indicating that he had bought the favor of a new class of elites (Redford 1987, 166). After all, since Akhenaten was building a new capital around the cult of a formerly obscure god, he needed to create an entirely new class, and there is no better way than to favor a class of "new men" who did not come from the traditional administrative class (Redford 1987, 165).

The royal family was always a central feature of Amarna art, and the art clearly demonstrates the revolutionary changes that occurred during the period. No longer is the king depicted as being strong, lithe and powerful;

instead the rulers are depicted with a long drooping face, a rounded swollen belly, and curved thighs, features that are more akin to the female form and representations of fertility than that of an Egyptian king. Nefertiti is also depicted in this fecund style, giving credence to the theory that these changes were simply the result of artistic derivation, with a new theology, and a new city, came a new artistic style. A further representation of the creator/fertility aspect of the god Aten may be seen in the importance placed upon depictions of the whole royal family, king, queen, and princesses alike. No longer along the walls of the temples and those of the palaces did the images depicted follow a strict canon of set proportions. Instead, the images began to take on a more three-dimensional quality, making them appear more fluid and lifelike. All of these changes are thought to represent the androgynous aspect of the Aten, to show him as cosmic creator, and the fertile giver of life, containing within himself both the male and the female aspects of divinity.

A talatat depicting Nefertiti

A further representation of this aspect of the god may be seen in the importance placed upon depictions of the whole royal family, including the

king, queen, and princesses alike. Although not unheard of, it was uncommon for royal children to be depicted alongside their parents in official representations, but many such images are found at Amarna. Along the walls of the temples and those of the palaces the images depicted would have followed a strict canon of set proportions.

Interestingly, throughout the Eighteenth Dynasty there are multiple representations of royal princesses but very few of sons, and it remains unclear why sons are excluded from scenes. Of course, in the case of Nefertiti and Akhenaten, the exclusion of sons was most likely a simple case of there being no sons shared by the couple. Given the importance that was placed upon the family unit, it is unlikely that a son would have been excluded if he had existed.

The pictorial reliefs in the nobles' tombs at Amarna may have represented the societal changes that were taking place, but the architecture was fairly standard for the period. New Kingdom tombs were meant to preserve not only the mummy of the owner, but also the physical wealth he would need in the afterlife. As such, tombs operated in a ritualistic manner and were the site where the deceased's ancestors could make offerings, much like a New Kingdom king's mortuary temple.

Due to these theological connections, New Kingdom tombs resembled temples in many ways, and the tombs at Amarna were some of the most impressive of the New Kingdom, even when compared to the tombs built earlier in the Eighteenth Dynasty in the Valley of the Kings. The Amarna tombs followed the architectural patterns of earlier Eighteenth Dynasty tombs in Thebes, featuring a cross-corridor that expanded into a hall with two or more columns (Aldred 2001, 24).

One of the most impressive of the south tombs belonged to a man named Ay, who was a military officer, high-priest, one of the king's most trusted men, and would later be Tutankhamun's successor. His was the largest tomb, as it was designed to have 24 columns in three rows, but only a little more than half of the chamber was cut (Aldred 2001, 24). The inscriptions from Ay's tomb give some background on his relationship with the king and his understanding of the Aten theology: "Adoration of Re-Harakhti-who-rejoices-in-lightland In-his-name-Shu-who-is-Aten, living forever; the great living Aten who is in jubilee, the lord of all that the Disk encircles, lord of the

sky, lord of earth, lord of the house-of-Aten in Akhet-Aten; (and of) the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, who lives by Maat, the Lord of the Two Lands, *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of Re* ; the Son of Re who lives by Maat, the Lord of Crowns, Akhenaten, great in his lifetime; (and) his beloved great Queen, the Lady of the Two Lands, Nefer-neferu-Aten Nefertiti, who lives in health and youth forever. (Lichtheim 1976, 96). Ay was apparently someone who made himself useful and who could read the tea leaves of change because he continued to be an important person long after Akhenaten was gone and Amarna had been abandoned.

Along with the religious imagery and theological philosophy, the tombs of Amarna present an image of the city being a military state. Besides the military escorts Akhenaten always had when he made his processions through the city, the tombs reliefs show the military present in the city in a number of other contexts, leading some modern Egyptologists to assert that Amarna was a police state and that Akhenaten was something akin to being the world's first dictator (Montserrat 2003, 108-113). This assumption is neither fair nor accurate and perhaps says more about the modern world than ancient Egypt or the Amarna Period. By definition, every ancient Egyptian king was a dictator, given that the king owned all of the land and anything he said was the law. Furthermore, during the New Kingdom the king was the commander-in-chief and usually accompanied the troops into battle, so military motifs were quite common (Spalinger 2005, 101-6).

With that said, Akhenaten does seem to have given some preference to certain members of the military. Another one of the more prominent tombs at Amarna belonged to a man named Mahu, who was the chief of a military/police detachment known as the *Medjay* . The Medjay were originally a Nubian nomadic group employed by the Egyptians as scouts and light infantry beginning in the Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1650-1550 BCE) (Shaw and Nicholson 1995, 178). By the time of Akhenaten's reign, the Medjay were employed as a police force or paramilitary that was totally separate from the regular army (Kemp 1991, 292). Although the prominence of this group during Akhenaten's rule could suggest that he felt threatened (perhaps by the old religious establishment), that theory is based purely on conjecture.

Mahu is depicted exercising the duties of his office and being rewarded by the king in a number of scenes on the walls of the tomb (Murnane 1995, 149-

50). In the accompanying texts, Mahu gives praise and adoration to both the Aten and Akhenaten. Part of one of the texts reads:

> "[Adoration to you], O living Aten, and kissing the ground to Waenre, the god who constructs people and causes the Two Lands to live. May you grant me a good funeral after old age. For the ka of the chief of the Medjay of Akhet -<Aten>, Mahu, justified.
>
> "[Adoration] to [you], O living Aten, lord of continuity – for you are dazzling, fair, powerful, <your> love being great [and extensive]. [For the ka of the Chief of the Medjay of Akhet-Aten, Mahu, justified]." (Murnane 1995, 148).

One of the biggest gaps in the history of Egyptology has been the lack of archaeology conducted on the houses and settlements of non-royals. A major factor for that has been that medieval and modern settlements were not only built over the ancient villages, but that there has traditionally been less interest in the lives of ordinary Egyptians. This attitude began to change after World War II, and today there are numerous Egyptologists who dedicate their research to social history and the archaeology of sites housed by non-elites.

Barry Kemp in particular has made it a point that his excavations at Amarna reflected the life of the entire city and therefore the full spectrum of ancient Egyptian society. Kemp's work has revealed that most residents at Amarna either lived in the North Suburb or what is known as the Main City, located just south of the Central City (Kemp 1991, 294). Most importantly, the excavations also uncovered that people of all economic backgrounds lived in the same neighborhoods, which meant a wealthy high-priest may have lived next to a peasant (Kemp 1991, 298).

The excavations also revealed some interesting aspects about the religious lives of non-elites at Amarna. Many of the homes were built with altars to the Aten (Morenz 1992, 108), which indicates that although Akhenaten's religious changes may have taken place from the top, they apparently trickled down to the rest of Egyptian society. The idea that the non-elites of Amarna willingly gave up the old gods, especially Amun, in favor of Aten worship is interesting, but more evidence is needed before any conclusions can be drawn. It may have been simply that the inhabitants of Amarna knew they had to curry favor with their ruler, and these altars may have been proof of

loyalty more than any genuine religious conversion.

Still, there is no denying that the Aten theology was pervasive at Amarna, influencing nearly everything that happened in the city. As mentioned earlier, the Aten was actually the disk of the sun and always represented as such in the art. The Aten was mentioned in texts before Akhenaten, at least back to the Middle Kingdom, but rarely worshipped as a specific deity, as Re, Atum, and other manifestations of the sun god were worshipped instead. The textual evidence shows, though, that a gradual transition began to take place during the rule of Akhenaten's father, Amunhotep III.

By all appearances Amunhotep III was a standard Egyptian pharaoh in terms of religion, worshipping all of the major gods, including Amun, but the king was a true believer in the solar theology and mentioned Aten much more than previous pharaohs (Silverman 1991, 74). On a scarab that commemorated the construction of a new royal lake and barge, it is noted that the boat was named after the Aten: "Regnal year 11, third month of the Inundation season, day 1 under the Person of the Horus, 'Mighty Bull who appears in Maat'; Two Ladies 'Who Establishes Laws and Pacifies the Two Lands'; Golden Horus 'Whose Valor is Great, Smiter of Asiatics'; King of Upper and Lower Egypt Nebmaat-Re, the Son of Re, Amunhotep III, given life; and the King's Chief Wife Tiy, may she live. His person commanded the making of a lake for the King's Chief Wife Tiy – may she live – in her town (called) Djarukha. Its length is 3,700 cubits and its width 700 cubits. His Person celebrated the festival of 'Opening the Lakes' in the third month of Inundation, day 16, just as his Person was rowed within it in the royal barge (called) 'Aten is Dazzling.'" (Murnane 1995, 20). Although this text only makes a brief reference to the Aten, it was notably important to the king.

Amunhotep III's belief in the solar ideology is further demonstrated in other texts from his reign, most notably a life-size statue discovered in 1989 that now sits in the Luxor Museum. The text on the statue makes numerous references to the Aten, and interestingly, the references to Amun - including the king's name - were later erased by followers of the Aten (Murnane 1995, 19). The back pillar contains the most important references to the Aten, part of which reads, "Re-Harakhty, Mighty Bull who appears in Maat, Good God in true fact, the sovereign, ruler of the Nine Bows, dazzling Aten for all lands, whose sacred cobra has illuminated the Two Shores; functional king,

perfect in monuments, master of laws, who sets the Two Shores in order, being one who makes functional the mansions of the gods and makes festive their temples." (Murnane 1995, 20). Numerous other references in texts from Amunhotep III's reign refer to him as the "dazzling Aten/sun disk" (Murnane 1995, 21) which clearly set the tone for Akhenaten's later religious changes.

The religious policy that Akhenaten pursued was therefore influenced by his father's theological beliefs and was not sudden. Moving the capital to Amarna was somewhat radical, but it also should have been expected when considering this religious transition in its proper historical context. In fact, Akhenaten began his rule as a follower of the more traditional solar theology and still recognized the importance of other sun gods later in his reign, as evidenced by his incorporation of Re's name into the names of two of his daughters, Neferneferure and Setepenre and his mentions of Re in numerous texts. Although the worship of Aten all but disappeared after Akhenaten's reign (Wilkinson 2003, 236), the texts from the tombs at Amarna have shed much light on its theology.

May was the name of a man who was quite important in the city of Amarna. His tomb relates a number of his titles, one of the most important being the "Fan Bearer" of the king. As part of this position, May spent as much time around Akhenaten as anyone and was therefore subject to the most important details of the Aten theology. May's tomb detailed some of the aspects of the Aten and its relationship to the king. Part of the text reads:

> "Thy rays are upon thy glorious emanation, the ruler of truth, who came forth from eternity. Thou grantest to him thy lifetime and thy years; thou hearest for him that which is in his heart. He is thy beloved; thou makest him like Aton; thy child, who came forth from thy rays, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Neferkheprure-Wanre, who hath made for thee the mighty Akhet-aton, great in loveliness, mistress of pleasant ceremonies, rich in possessions, the offerings to Re in her midst; at the sight of her beauty there is rejoicing. She is lovely and beautiful; when one sees her, it is like a glimpse at heaven; her number cannot be calculated. When the Aten rises in her, he fills her with his rays, and he embraces his beloved son, son of eternity who came forth from Aten, and offers the earth to him who placed him on his throne, causing the earth to belong to Irsu.

> “Every land is festive at his rising; they assemble, making oblations to his ka, to Aten, rising in the horizon every early morning. Thy son presents truth to thy beautiful face; thou rejoices when thou seest him, (for) he came forth from thee. Thou settest [him] as king like the Aten, Neferkheprure-Wanre, living and sound, like the Aten.” (Breasted 2001, 412-13).

This text reveals a few important things about the Aten theology. First, it would be difficult to claim that Akhenaten was a true monotheist or that Aten worship was a monotheistic religion because another god, Re, is mentioned in this text. Re was another manifestation of the sun as the Aten was, but the text differentiates between the two. Moreover, the city of Akhet-Aten plays a central role in the hymn, and the Aten, unlike most other Egyptian deities, appears to be omnipresent.

The Aten theology is best articulated in two texts found within the tombs of Amarna known as the Great Hymn to the Aten and the Short Hymn to the Aten. The Short Hymn is inscribed in five different tombs at Amarna (Lichtheim 1976, 90), and the Great Hymn is best preserved in a 13-column text in the tomb of Ay (Lichtheim 1976, 92). Part of the Short Hymn reads:

> “Splendid you rise, O living Aten, eternal lord!
>
> You are radiant, beauteous, mighty,
>
> Your love is great, immense.
>
> Your rays light up all faces,
>
> Your bright hue gives life to hearts,
>
> When you fill the Two Lands with your love.
>
> August God who fashioned himself,
>
> Who made every land, created what is in it,
>
> All peoples, herds, and flocks,
>
> All trees that grow from soil;
>
> They live when you dawn for them,

You are mother and father of all that you made. . .

Singers, musicians, shout with joy,

In the court of the benben-shrine,

And in all temples in Akhet-Aten,

The place of truth in which you rejoice.

Foods are offered in their midst,

Your holy son in his risings,

And all your creatures leap before you.

Your august son exults in joy,

O Aten living daily content in the sky,

Your offspring, your august son, Sole one of Re;

The Son of Re does not cease to extol his beauty,

Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of Re.

I am your son who serves you, who exalts your name,

Your power, your strength, are firm in my heart;

You are the living Aten whose image endures,

You have made the far sky to shine in it,

To observe all that you made.

You are One yet a million lives are in you,

To make them live (you give) the breath of life to their noses;

By the sight of your rays all flowers exist

What lives and sprouts from the soil grows when you shine.

Drinking deep of your sight all flocks frisk,

The birds in the nest fly up in joy;

Their folded wings unfold in praise

Of the living Aten, their maker.”

On the one hand, the hymn does seem to advocate a monotheistic worldview, as the Aten is responsible for all life, Akhenaten is its faithful servant, and Akhet-Aten is its home on Earth. However, there are references to the sun god Re, so it does seem that Akhenaten at least recognized some of the old gods and at least tolerated their name in Amarna, even if there were no temples dedicated to them.

Some of the ideas put forth in the Short Hymn are more fully elucidated in the Great Hymn in Ay’s tomb. The hymn relates in detail all of the power of the Aten and why it deserves its prime (or only) position of worship.

“Splendid you rise in heaven’s lightland,

O living Aten, creator of life!

When you have dawned in eastern lightland,

You fill every land with your beauty.

You are beauteous, great, radiant,

High over every land;

Your rays embrace the lands,

To the limit of all that you made.

Being Re, you reach their limits,

You bend them <for> the son whom you love;

Though you are far, your rays are on earth,

Though one sees you, your strides are unseen. . .

Who makes seed grow in women,

Who creates people from sperm;

Who feeds the son in his mother’s womb,

Who soothes him to still his tears.

Nurse in the womb,

Giver of breath,

To nourish all that he made.

When he comes from the womb to breathe,

On the day of his birth,

You open wide his mouth,

You supply his needs. . .

Your rays nurse all fields,

When you shine they live, they grow for you;

You made the seasons to foster all that you made,

Winter to cool them, heat that they taste you.

You made the far sky to shine therein,

To behold all that you made;

You alone, shining in your form of living Aten,

Risen, radiant, distant, near.

You made millions of forms from yourself alone,

Towns, villages, fields, the river's course;

All eyes observe you upon them,

For you are the Aten of daytime on high."

The Great Hymn much more explicitly states that the Aten is responsible for all life and creation, and in this reading it appears to be a universal god. Unlike many of the traditional Egyptian gods who specifically existed in Egypt, the Aten exists everywhere and seemingly for everyone, even non-Egyptians. Re is mentioned almost as being one with the Aten, which again may be related to the commonality of their solar attributes.

The text from the Amarna tombs illuminates many aspects of the Aten religion, but they do little to clarify how the god was worshipped or how Akhenaten and the other followers viewed it in a historical context. Unlike

the ancient Greeks, the ancient Egyptians did not have an extensive myth cycle to explain the backgrounds of their gods and goddesses. The most notable Egyptian myths are dated to the New Kingdom and include *The Destruction of Mankind* and *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* . Both of these myths portray the Egyptian deities in a somewhat Greek-like manner, full of foibles and follies, but ultimately just and wise. The ancient Egyptians also had three primary creation myths – the Heliopolitan, the Hermopolitan, and the Memphite – which explained how the primary creator gods in their pantheon created the world. Along with those limited myths, the ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses were depicted in statuary and reliefs as either humans or when they were animals or animal-human hybrids, with anthropomorphic features which gave them all personalities.

The Aten, on the other hand, had no accompanying myths and was never represented with anthropomorphic features, only as the sun disk (Redford 1984, 169). There is also mystery surrounding the Aten cult's rituals, including how the god was worshipped and the composition of the god's priesthood, if any even existed. Based on the texts discussed earlier, though, it appears that the Aten was regarded as not only omniscient and omnipresent, but also that it had always existed.

The theology of the Aten was certainly different than that of the traditional Egyptian gods and goddesses, so it's no surprise Akhenaten's worship of the Aten also brought other notable changes to Amarna and Egyptian society in general. The hymns in the Amarna tombs, the text of the Amarna Boundary Stelae, and texts dated to the reigns of Akhenaten's immediate successors were all written in a style known in English as "Late Egyptian." This style of writing is believed to have been closer to the vernacular language of the time and much less complex than the "classical" form of the written Egyptian hieroglyphic language known as "Middle Egyptian" (Dijk 2000, 284). The Boundary Stelae were the first examples of this change in writing, offering yet another example of change Akhenaten made to Egyptian society that began in the city of Amarna (Junge 2001, 20).

With that said, the differences were not as fundamental as some scholars once believed. It was mainly due to the Late Egyptian style employing forms that were present in Middle Egyptian, but rarely used. It should also be pointed out that aspects of Late Egyptian were present in the written language before Akhenaten's reign, so how much change he consciously initiated

remains a question (Junge 2001, 22).

Connected to both the change in theology and writing was how the name of the Aten was written in most texts. Although the name was spelled the same as it had been in previous periods, it was often written within a cartouche. Since the cartouche, a circle around a king's name, implied royalty, it is obvious that Akhenaten meant for his king to be considered the king of the Egyptian pantheon (Silverman 1991, 83).

Along with the changes to the religion and the written language that took place in Amarna, changes in the artistic style are by far the most notable, and these may also be influenced by te theology. As mentioned earlier, when one looks at reliefs of Akhenaten with Nefertiti, it would be difficult to tell them apart if they did not have different crowns on, because the king clearly has an androgynous look. Many historians believe that the androgyny was done to reflect the Aten, which was without form or sex (Robins 2000, 150). On this note, Hornung has pointed out that the Aten was sometimes referred to in texts as "mother and father," which would certainly denote a type of androgyny (Hornung 1996, 148).

Others scholars argue that Akhenaten's bizarre appearance in the art of the Amarna Period was actually realistic and is indicative of a real affliction from which he suffered. These theories run the gamut, and some are quite creative. One popular theory is that Akhenaten suffered from an endocrine disorder, possibly hermaphroditism, which would explain his seemingly asexual look (Aldred 2001, 231-2). Marfan Syndrome is another potential medical affliction that has been bandied around to explain Akhenaten's strange appearance since those afflicted with the disease often have elongated hands and facial features just as the king did in the artwork (Montserrat 2003, 48).

Other Egyptologists refuse to assign a particular condition to Akhenaten, but still believe that the representations are realistic and reflect some type of physical abnormality. When considering that Akhenaten was rarely featured in artistic depictions with his father, Redford noted, "It may well be that he was intentionally kept in the background because of a congenital ailment which made him hideous to behold" (Redford 1984, 57-58). The same androgynous artistic style was employed in the nobles' tombs at Amarna, which could offer proof that Akhenaten had no physical abnormalities or that contemporaries made sure they were depicted with the same features as a sign

of loyalty (Robins 2000, 156).

Although most of the modern studies on Akhenaten's reign and the city of Amarna concern his religious ideas, there was obviously more going on in Amarna than just religion. Akhenaten has often been portrayed in fictional works as the world's first true pacifist, interested only in the esoteric aspects of Aten worship and having little to do with the mundane functions of government and warfare (Montserrat 2003, 144). This idea of Akhenaten as a pacifist has been promoted in films such as *The Egyptian* (1953), as well as numerous fictional books.

However, a closer look at some of the primary texts from Amarna and other places in Egypt reveals that Akhenaten was not afraid to go to war, and that Amarna was also the center of state power and a typical Egyptian capital in most ways. For example, hieroglyphic texts from the sites of Buhen and Amada indicate that Akhenaten ordered an invasion of Nubia in the 12th year of his rule, which means that it took place long after the capital had been moved to Amarna. The stela from Buhen reads:

> "[Regnal year 1]2, third month of Inundation, day 20 . . . Akhenaten, king in his lifetime. . . having appeared on [the throne of] his father, the Aten , , , the enemies of the foreign country Ikayta [were plotting rebellion and had (even) invaded the land of] the Nilotic Nubians, while taking all sustenance away from them . . .
>
> "Thereupon his Person charged the King's Son [of Kush and overseer of the southern countries with assembling an army in order to defeat the] enemies of the foreign country of Ikayta, males [as well as females. These enemies were found on the eastern side of] the river, to the north of the cistern(s) of the mining region . . . upon the highland, and the fugitive was smitten . . . [while the] cry of victory was in their heart(s) – 'a [fierce] lion, slaying [myriads throughout] the land [in] valor and victory!'" (Murnane 1995, 101-2).

The Amada stela essentially repeats much of what is in the Buhen stela, but it is in much more damaged condition. Due to the fragmentary condition of the texts, it is unknown what led to the campaign or if there were further

expeditions, but the location of the enemies is quite clear, and it's apparent Akhenaten was far from a pacifist.

Other texts from Amarna confirm that Akhenaten was not only interested in keeping possession of Nubia, but that maintaining Egypt's high standing in the Near East was vitally important to him. Around the time that he sent the military expedition into Nubia, Akhenaten entertained emissaries from several different kingdoms at Amarna. Canaanites from the Levant, Nubians, and even people from the Aegean all came to Akhet-Aten to pay their respects to the king and his new city (Aldred 2001, 279).

The details are related in reliefs and texts in the Amarna tombs of the officials Huya and Meryra. Huya was the chief steward of Akhenaten's mother Tiy which meant that he personally took part in the event. The text reads, "Regnal year 12, second month of the Seed season, day 8. Long live the (twice royal) father, Heka-Aten, given life forever continually. Appearance of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Neferkheprure-Waenre and the King's Chief Wife Neferneferuaten-Nefertiti – may she live forever continually – on the great carrying chair of electrum, in order to receive the products of Kharu and Kush, the west and the east. All foreign countries gathered as one, and the islands in the midst of the sea are presenting products to the king upon Akhet-Aten's great throne of receiving the dues of every foreign country, while the granting of the breath of life is made to him." (Murnane 1995, 134-5). The countries mentioned are Kharu (the Levant/Syria), Kush (Nubia), and the "islands in the midst," which were the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea.

Perhaps the greatest collection of texts that testifies to Akhenaten's foreign policy and Amarna's place in the geopolitics of the period are collectively known as the "Amarna Letters," a collection of 382 clay tablet letters of correspondence between the Egyptian kings – Amunhotep III, Akhenaten, and Tutankhamun –the "great kings" of Babylon, Hatti, Cyprus, Assyria, and Mitanni, and the "lesser kings" of the Levant. The texts were written in a modified form of the Akkadian language using the cuneiform script, which was used throughout the Late Bronze Age Near East with the exception of Egypt, but the Egyptians used it in official documents to communicate with the other Near Eastern peoples (Moran 1992, i-xxxix). The tablets were discovered in the late 19th century in the ruins of what would have been "The

House of Correspondence of Pharaoh" during the time of Akhenaten (Aldred 2001, 188). The title of the building was a wordy and very ancient Egyptian way of describing an office where records were kept. Copies of the tablets were probably written in the Egyptian language in the traditional hieroglyphic script on papyrus scrolls, but unfortunately none are extant (Aldred 2001, 189).

The Amarna Letters have helped historians clarify what was taking place in the Near East during the Late Bronze Age, and today the system is referred to as the "Great Powers' Club" (Kuhrt 2010, 185-380). The Great Powers' Club began around the year 1600 BCE and continued until the advent of the Sea Peoples' invasions and the collapse of various societies in the region by 1200 BCE.

The letters show that Akhenaten played an active role in the system, and while the development of the Aten cult and the building of Amarna may have been at the top of his political and social agenda, he did not abandon Egypt's place in the Great Powers' Club. Akhenaten's rule coincided with much of Babylonian King Burnaburiash II's rule (ca. 1359-1333 BCE), and in one letter, Burnaburiash II requests that Akhenaten send him gold and artists in exchange for lapis lazuli: "Now, though you and I are friends, 3 times have your messengers come to me and you have not sent me a single beautiful greeting-gift, nor have I for my part sent you a beautiful greeting-gift. (I am one for whom nothing is scarce, and you are one for whom nothing is scarce.) As for your messenger whom you sent to me, the 20 minas of gold that were brought here were there. When they put it into the kiln, not 5 minas of gold appeared. . . There are skilled carpenters where you are. Let them represent a wild animal, land or aquatic, lifelike, so that the hide is exactly like that of a live animal. Let your messenger bring it to me. . . I send as your greeting-gift 2 minas of lapis lazuli, and concerning your daughter Mayati, having heard (about her), I send to her as her greeting-gift a necklace of cricket-(shaped) gems, of lapis lazuli, 1048 their number." (Moran 1992, EA 10).

This letter indicates not only that Akhenaten was still active in international affairs, but that Amarna was also doing well economically. Amarna's wealth was referred to in another letter from Burnaburiash II to Akhenaten that suggests the two even developed an ancient type of checking system: "Furthermore, whatever my brother wants, let my brother just write me so it can be taken from the house. Being engaged on a work, I write to my brother.

May my brother send me much fine gold so I can use it on my work. But the gold that my brother sends me, my brother should not turn over to the charge of any deputy. My brother should make a [personal] check, then my brother should seal and send it to me. Certainly my brother did not check the earlier (shipment of) gold that my brother sent to me. It was only a deputy of my brother who sealed and sent it to me." (Moran 1992, EA 7).

Although Akhenaten was no doubt busy promoting the Aten cult and overseeing the ongoing construction of his city, he still had funds to spare for trading with the Babylonian king, and other letters demonstrate that he was respected as much as any of the other great kings.

Egypt's position in the Great Powers' Club remained stable throughout this time, but things were much more chaotic northern Mesopotamia and Anatolia. The Hittites constantly battled other powerful kingdoms in Anatolia and the Kingdom of Mitanni, which was in northern Mesopotamia until collapsed in the 14th century BCE and allowed the Assyrians to fill the void (Kuhrt 2010, 290). One Amarna Letter details how Assyria's King Ashur-uballit I (ruled ca. 1362-1328 BCE) made his introduction to Akhenaten and officially joined the Great Powers' Club: " Say to the king of E[gypt]. Thus Aššur-uba[lit, the king of As]yria. For you, your household, for your [coun]try, for your chariots and your troops, may all go well. I send my messenger to you to visit you and to visit your country. Up to now, my predecessors have not written; today I write you. [I] send you a beautiful chariot, 2 horses, [and] 1 date-stone of genuine lapis lazuli, as your greeting-gift. Do [no]t delay the messenger whom I send to you for a visit. He should visit and then leave for here. HE should see what you are like and what your country is like, and then leave for here." (Moran 1992, EA 15).

The End of the Amarna Period

Amarna was clearly an important place during Akhenaten's reign, but it was largely dependent on the king and his patronage of the Aten. As a result, once Akhenaten died, the importance of Amarna was almost sure to diminish.

Before Tutankhamun on the list of kings, there are two other possible pharaohs, Smenkhare and Neferneferuaten. It is not known whether Smenkhare or Neferneferuaten ruled independently or if they were both co-regents with Akhenaten at some point. It has even been argued that they are

one and the same person, though there is a general consensus that due to the feminine “t” ending found in Neferneferuaten’s name that she was a female ruler. Smenkhare has a masculine name and is often depicted with another female by his side, presumably his wife, which makes it highly unlikely that the two rulers where the same person.

It is thought by some that Neferneferuaten was Nefertiti, although there is very little evidence to support this, short of Nefertiti having been known to use the title herself. While it is possible that Nefertiti ruled as co-regent with her husband, or even briefly on her own for a very short period after his death, there is no real evidence other than conjecture to support such a hypothesis.

The question of Nefertiti’s status after the death of Akhenaten is further confused by the fact that all mention of her seems to disappear, so nothing is known about her death. It is not known when she died, how she died, or where she died, and her body has never been positively identified. The reason for Nefertiti’s disappearance from the historical record is unclear, but it did coincide with death of her daughter Meritaten. A plague swept through the region during this period, and Meritaten is thought to have died from the illness, leading some to hypothesize that Nefertiti also died around the same time. However, given the extensive scenes of mourning by both parents found in Akhenaten’s tomb for Meritaten, and the complete lack of any mourning scenes of Nefertiti, this theory is full of holes. And if Nefertiti had died in year 12 of her husband’s reign, it seems logical that she would have been interred in Akhenaten’s tombs and that his grief over her passing would have been great, and worthy of depiction.

It is more likely that Nefertiti survived Akhenaten, and her disappearance from the historical record suggests nothing other than the fact that historians lack all of the documents of the period. Either way, what happened to her after his death can only be guessed at. Moreover, her mummy has yet to be positively identified. There is only a small broken shabti figure, with an inscription referring to Nefertiti, that connects her to Akhenaten’s tomb and burial, and it remains the only evidence regarding her own burial. The Shabti figurine reads, “The Heiress high and mighty in the palace, one trusted of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Neferkheperure Waenre, the son of Re (Akhenaten), Great in his lifetime, the Chief Wife of the King,

Neferneferuaten-Nefertiti, Living forever and ever.” [11]

At the beginning of the 21st century, some believed that the “Elder Lady” mummy might be Nefertiti, based on its location and the age of the mummy, which was in her 30s-40s. Busts of Nefertiti suggested some resemblance with the mummy as well. However, DNA analysis and other examinations conclusively proved that the “Elder Lady” mummy was the daughter of Yuya and Thuya, thus eliminating Nefertiti and seemingly verifying that it was Queen Tiy.

With the “Elder Lady” ruled out, speculation has turned to one of the unidentified mummies found alongside the Elder Lady mummy in tomb KV35 in the Valley of the Kings. The mummy has been nicknamed "The Younger Lady", and some Egyptologists have argued that it is Nefertiti herself based on descriptions of the mummy as being a 5’2 woman around the age of 25. Substantial damage had been done to the mummy, likely by grave robbers during antiquity, but the woman had suffered a fatal wound to her jaw area. Other evidence, including the mummification techniques and the use of embalming fluid, all suggested it was an Eighteenth Dynasty mummy, which makes sense since it was buried next to Queen Tiy. Those insisting the Younger Lady mummy is Nefertiti also argue that beads and a rare wig found in the tomb lend credence to their theory.

The Younger Lady mummy

However, most Egyptologists dismiss the theory, or at least continue to insist that there's no way to conclusively prove the mummy is Nefertiti. One sticking point among them is that no DNA analysis could prove Nefertiti's identity because it remains unclear who her parents were, and the remains of her children have never been positively identified either. One recent study analyzed the mummy and came to the conclusion that the Younger Lady may have been Tutankhamen's mother or one of Amenhotep III's daughters, while others have even thrown out the possibility that the mummy is Meritaten, the daughter of Nefertiti and Akhenaten who may have died of plague near the

12th year of his reign. On top of all that, the search for Nefertiti is further complicated by the fact that Tutankhamen reversed some of his father's theological changes and is believed to have eventually had his relatives moved from Akhetaten and reinterred in the Valley of Kings. Whatever the case, without being able to identify the mummy with certainty, it could be one of the dozens of royal wives or daughters who lived during the Eighteenth Dynasty, a period of time spanning more than two centuries.

Even less is known about Smenkhare, who may have been the younger brother of Akhenaten (though there is no evidence that proves such a familial connection). It is not known whether he ruled as co-regent before Neferneferuaten or after, or if he ruled independently for a time. The main documented reference to him as pharaoh comes from the tomb of Meryre II, in the Northern tomb necropolis at Amarna. Whilst the actual scene is lost, it is recorded that there was a scene depicting the king Smenkhare and his great wife Meritaten handing out tribute from a balcony or "window of appearance", just as Akhenaten and Nefertiti were so often depicted doing. With the scene now being lost it is difficult to determine Smenkhare's place within the royal Eighteenth Dynasty line. Very little is known about the end of Akhenaten's reign, and the possible rule of Smenkhare and/or Neferneferuaten. It is not until the reign of Tutankhamun that the historical record becomes clearer again.

It is believed that Tutankhamun ascended to the Egyptian throne in 1336 BCE, and at that time his royal praenomen was Tutankhaten, not Tutankhamun. He would have only been a child of around 9 years of age when he became Egypt's ruler, but he was not the first child of the Eighteenth Dynasty to ascend the throne, as both Thutmose III and Amenhotep III ascended the throne at very young ages as well. Unlike Tutankhamun, however, those earlier kings had female regents to help rule on their behalf until they came of age. Hatshepsut famously ruled not only as regent but as the king in her own right on behalf of her stepson Thutmose III, while Mutemwiya was Amenhotep III's regent.

It is not clear why Tutankhamun had no female relations ruling as regent. Typically such a position would have been taken up by the young king's mother, who in the case of Tutankhamun is thought to been Kiya. Whilst the historical record marginally supports Kiya as being the most likely candidate

for the mother of Tutankhamun, recent DNA studies done on the mummies of the Eighteenth Dynasty royal family show that Tutankhamun was a child of incest and that his parents were siblings who were in turn the children of Amenhotep III and his great wife Queen Tiye. While this leaves little doubt that Akhenaten was Tutankhamun's father, it leads to further questions concerning who his mother was because Akhenaten had five sisters. At the same time, there have been accusations made about the accuracy of the data. Given how recent the data is (2008), it still difficult to determine how it may fit in with the historical record. If he was the son of Akhenaten, and one of the king's sister, then which sister was it? He most definitely was not the son of Nefertiti, but Kiya still cannot be completely dismissed as potentially being Tutankhamun's mother because very little is known about her origins, and there has been no mummy identified as being hers.

In the historical record there is a fair amount of controversy surrounding Kiya. She first appears in Amarna around the middle of Akhenaten's reign, and it has often been postulated that she was a Mitannian princess, since her appearance in Amarna coincides with Akhenaten's triumph in his Nubian campaign. Kiya may have been a form of "tribute" he received from "all foreign countries gathered as one" in the 12th year of his reign, but the name Kiya is most definitely Egyptian, and there is no real evidence to suggest that she was from a foreign land. Kiya was granted the title "greatly beloved wife of the king", which set her apart from any other members of the king's harem but also denoted her place below Nefertiti, who was the "Great Wife of the king". It was also around year 12 that Kiya disappears from the monuments of Amarna, with her name being erased and replaced by that of Meritaten, who was a daughter of Nefertiti and Akhenaten. Why she so suddenly disappeared from the record is something of a mystery. Was she removed because she had become a rival of Nefertiti, or did she suddenly fall ill? Since her name was actively removed from monuments, it is unlikely that she simply fell ill, and they suggest she fell out of favor in some way. If it is possible that she was the mother of Tutankhamun, it could be that his birth was the cause of Kiya's descent into disfavour. Since her fall from grace coincides with the inscription found naming Tutankhamun as "the king's bodily son, his beloved, Tutankhaten", it is possible that by bearing the king a son, a feat that Nefertiti never accomplished, she fell into great disfavor in the eyes of the great wife. Only the appearance of new evidence may be able to

shed new light onto her life and possible parentage of Tutankhamun.

With his mother having possibly been cast out from the royal court when he was little more than an infant or a very young child, Tutankhamun was left with very few options for a regent. One may have presumed that Nefertiti would have stepped into this role, especially if she had been acting as co-regent alongside Akhenaten in the later years of his reign. If one of Akhenaten's sisters was indeed the mother of Tutankhamun, so little is known of them that it cannot even be determined if she was alive at the time of Tutankhamun's ascent to the Egyptian throne. Unfortunately, so little is known about the last years of Akhenaten's reign that it is difficult to put the few pieces of surviving evidence together.

None of this may ever be known with certainty, but what is known is that the 9-year-old Tutankhamun came to the throne without a female regent. The position of trusted advisor was taken by another, one who was not even of the royal family. This replacement for the position of regent was taken by a man called Horemheb who bore no familial ties to Tutankhamun but was the senior commander of the army. How he came to be the commander of the Egyptian army is well documented in his own "Coronation text", which is inscribed on the back of a statue now in the Turin Museum, but why he was chosen to be Tutankhamun's advisor is not clear.

Given the young king's age, it should come as no surprise that Horemheb became the strong arm behind the throne, and he was even granted titles that implied he would have had the right to claim the throne in the event of Tutankhamun died without bearing any royal offspring. With the support of the military, Horemheb was able to quickly initiate strong policy changes in Egypt.

Within the first year of his reign Tutankhamun's name was changed from Tutankhaten to Tutankhamun, which means "ruler of southern Heliopolis". This was a direct and pointed reference to Karnak and the cult of the sun god Amun-Ra. Tutankhamun's name was not the only thing that changed. The royal court quickly abandoned Akhetaten and moved to Memphis, and although the city continued to be occupied for a time, it quickly fell into disuse and ruin. It's clear Horemheb was quickly seeing to the re-establishment of the "old ways".

Tutankhamun's reign is often referred to as the "Restoration", an apt name for his rule, or more accurately, for Horemheb's policies. The Restoration Stele is arguably the most important document of Tutankhamun's reign, as it details the so-called chaos that was brought about by Akhenaten's policies. According to the document, the gods had abandoned Egypt and the Egyptians, prayers were no longer listened to, the once great military met continued defeat in the east, and they were unable to defend their ally the Mitanni, they were losing territories throughout their northern frontier. Egypt had lost its way, particularly in the eyes of the military, and Horemheb now saw his chance to change all this with Tutankhamun's ascension to the throne. Early on in Tutankhamun's reign the traditional cults in Egypt were re-established, the military began further campaigns in the east fighting the Hittites, and Egypt's control over Nubia was expanded. Horemheb oversaw the militaristic expansion of the kingdom, while the chief treasurer Maya, oversaw the administrative re-organization and restoration of the cults. Maya also became responsible for the demolition of the temples and images of Aten, first focusing on those in Thebes and then on Amarna itself. It was this act of demolition that left Amarna bare, and led to its final abandonment. It is believed that Maya may have also been responsible for the removal of Akhenaten's mummy from his tomb in Amarna to a small tomb in the Valley of the Kings, KV 55, at least if the body found in KV 55 was indeed that of Akhenaten.

Statue of Akhenaten in the early Amarna style

Even though Tutankhamun and his advisors made a decided effort to restore Egypt's religious traditions, 20 years of the traditional cults being suppressed and the promotion of the sun god Aten had left its mark on Egypt's people. The political and cultural changes that took place during Tutankhamun's reign can be most easily understood by a study of the funerary changes that occurred. Such changes may be tracked through the developments found in tomb architecture that occurred during Tutankhamun's reign, and they endured throughout the rest of the New Kingdom Period. In Thebes the rock cut tombs of the past continued to be the norm, but there were changes made to their architecture and decoration.

They were adapted to portray the new views of a tomb being a private mortuary temple for its owner, and the funerary cult became integrated with the cult of Osiris, who was now viewed as being the nocturnal manifestation of Ra. Solar symbolism had become increasingly popular during the reign of Amenhotep III, and it was made paramount during the Amarna period with the sole worship of the sun god Aten. Under Amenhotep III, Ra-Horakty was the primary sun deity, symbolised by a falcon headed man, while during the Amarna period under Akhenaten, the Aten was depicted is a sun disk, with rays of light extended down onto the king and the world, ending in hands, a possible symbol of the creator and giver of life aspect of Aten. During Tutankhamun's reign, a solar deity was still paramount, that of Amun-Ra, but the primary representation of solar divinity became pyramids.

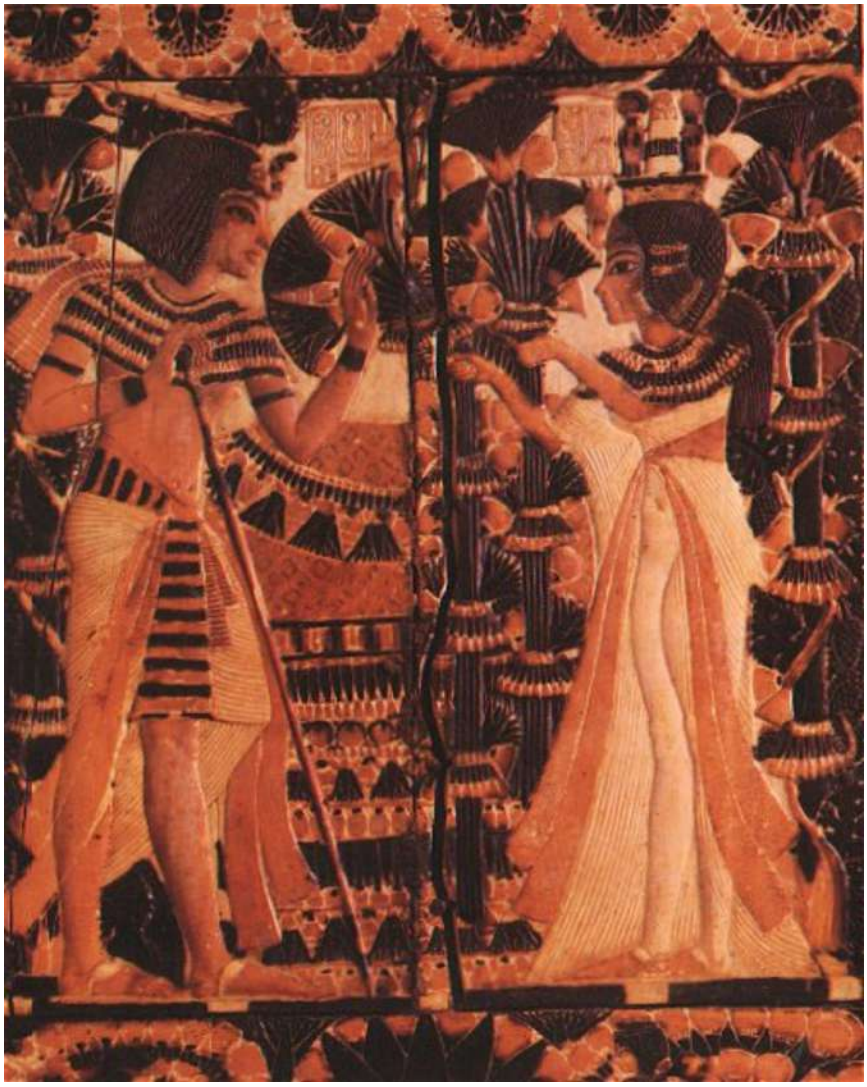
Pyramids had previously been preserved for the use of kings and queens, but they were now featured in a position of prominence on top of the central chapel in the tombs of the elite nobles. These changes can be seen at their fullest extent in the tombs found at Memphis, particularly with the tombs of Horemheb and Maya, which stand out with their large colonnade courtyards. Their tombs are laid out in such a way as to appear as small temples. Images and iconography that had once been reserved for temples could now be seen in tombs in the form of statues of deities, and scenes of offering. The scenes found upon the tomb walls were no longer focusing on the life and achievements of the deceased, but instead were depicting the worship and adoration of Ra, of Osiris, and of a multitude of other deities. With a few exceptions from the earlier portion of Tutankamun's reign, scenes that would have depicted the deceased making offerings to the king completely disappear.

Detail of a statue of Horemheb

The new focus in tomb architecture and decoration may be viewed as being a result of the strong emphasis that had previously been placed upon the sun god Aten, and the importance of temple worship, which was paramount in his cult. During Tutankhamun's rule the individual now found that he could commune more closely with the gods without having to go through the king as an intermediary. The face of Egyptian religion had been changed, and it would never return to its past form.

Short of the policy changes made at the beginning of his reign, under the influence of Horemheb, very little is known about Tutankhamun as an

individual. He was joined with his half-sister Ankhesenpaaten soon after he took to the throne, and she remained his only documented wife. Marriage to her may have been necessary in order to legitimize his right to rule. Ankhesenpaaten was the third daughter born of Nefertiti and Ankhenaten, probably born around year four of Akhenaten's reign, and she would have therefore been a few years older than Tutankhamun. Ankhesenpaaten's early life was fairly well documented; she often appeared alongside her two older sisters Meritaten and Meketaten, in conjunction with their parents Akhenaten and Neferiti, in numerous scenes from the tomb of Akhenaten, the tombs of the elite, and steles found at Amarna. She became the wife of Tutankhamun after the death of their father, and she soon changed her name, just as Tutankhamun had done, to Ankhesenamun in honor of the god Amun-Ra, meaning "her life is of Amun".



Tutankhamun receives flowers from Ankhesenamun. This image is on the lid of a box found in Tut's tomb.

Two stillborn female fetuses were found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, and they are believed to have been the couple's offspring. DNA analyses confirmed that they were indeed the children of Tutankhamun, and there was a female mummy found in KV21a whose DNA identified her as the mother of the stillborn fetuses found in Tutankhamun's tomb. Since Tutankhamun had only one documented wife, the mummy could be identified as being Ankhesenamun. It is not known when exactly she died, though it would have been after the death of Tutankhamun; no burial or tomb has as yet been identified as hers.

After the death of Tutankhamun she held the Egyptian throne for a time, with the support of Ay, who had been one of Tutankhamun's advisors. During this period she made a plea to the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I to send one of his sons to her, so that she may marry and join their two kingdoms. This is known from a letter that was found at the Hittite capital of Hattusa. The document is considered to be highly irregular and even extraordinary due to the Egyptians firm belief in the inferiority of foreigners. Even Suppiluliuma was leery of believing her plea, and of trusting Egyptians in general. His worries may not have been uncalled for, because even when he finally decided to send one of his sons, Zannanza, to Ankhesenamun, the son died en route to Egypt, possibly a result of murder. Without a husband to join Ankhesenamun on the throne, Ay soon took control of Egypt and was eventually crowned king. With Ay's ascent to the Egyptian throne, Ankhesenamun soon faded out of the historical record.

As for Tutankhamun, his burial has become the most known aspect of his life, but he left Amarna after about a year of rule (Robins 2000, 158). Before he left Amarna, though, he continued the correspondence with the other Great Powers. In one letter that is believed to have been addressed to Tutankhamun (Aldred 2001, 191), the Egyptian king is reproached by Burnaburiash II for accepting the Assyrians as one of the Great Powers:

> "Karad[un]iyaš, your brother. For me all goes well. For you, your household, your wives, your sons, your country, your ma[g]nates, your horses, your chariots, may all go very well.

> “From the time my ancestors and your ancestors made a mutual declaration of friendship, they sen[t] beautiful greeting-gifts to each other, and refused no request for anything beautiful. My brother has now sent me 2 minas of gold as my greeting-gift. Now, <i>f gold is plentiful, send me as much as your ancestors (sent), but if it is scarce, send me half of what your ancestors (sent). Why have you sent me 2 minas of gold? At the moment my work on a temple is extensive, and I am quite busy with carrying it out. Send me much gold. And you for your part, whatever you want from my country, write me so that it may be taken to you.
>
> “In the time of Kurigalzu, my ancestor, all the Canaanites wrote to him, saying ‘C[om]e to the border of the country so we can revolt and be allied [wi]th you.’ My ancestor sent them this (reply), saying, ‘Forget about being allied with me. If you become enemies of the king of Egypt, and are allied with anyone else, will I not then come and plunder you? How can there be an alliance with me?’ For the sake of your ancestor my ancestor did not listen to them. Now, as for my Assyrian vassals, I was not the one who sent them to you. Why on their own authority have they come to your country? If you love me, they will conduct no business whatsoever. Send them off to me empty-handed. I send to you as your greeting-gift 3 minas of genuine lapis lazuli and 5 teams of horses for 5 wooden chariots.” (Moran 1992, EA 9).

Not long after Tutankhamun received this letter, he left Amarna and the city was all but abandoned. Amarna had only been a city for 20 years.

The end of Amarna as a capital city did not necessarily mean that the city was forgotten. If anything, Tutankhamun’s reign suggests the Egyptians mostly wanted to forget it ever happened. Akhenaten’s body was almost certainly interred for a time at Amarna, but it was later brought to the Valley of the Kings with all of the other New Kingdom kings, possibly residing in KV 55 temporarily. Aten worship diminished and all but ended after Akhenaten died, but solar worship in general continued to be central for the remainder of the New Kingdom (Assmann 2001, 205).

The Nineteenth Dynasty kings had little to say about Akhenaten or Amarna and tried to consciously avoid any mention of him. Indeed, he was absent

from the Turin King List and Seti I's king list in the Abydos Temple (Murnane 1995, 241-2). When Akhenaten or most of the kings of the Amarna Period were mentioned, it was usually in a negative manner (with the exception of Horemheb). In fact, in numerous archival texts from the Nineteenth Dynasty, Akhenaten is often referred to as "the enemy" (O'Connor 2004, 186-7) which certainly indicates that his ideas fell out of favor and so too did the memory of his city.

A lawsuit from the reign of Ramesses II (ca. 1290-1224 BCE) demonstrates this attitude was prevalent in Egypt more than 100 years later. Part of the text reads, "What they said with one voice: 'As Amun endures, and as the ruler endures, we shall speak truthfully . . . As for me, I am from the town . . . today (?). I have seen the farming estate of the shipping master Neshi, it being in the possession of [the] heirs [and . . . , which took place in the time of the enemy of Akhet-Aten, while . . . [in] Akhet-Aten in [Takharu] . . . (the man) Iry became . . . on the farming estate, cultivating . . . Sheritre the mother of Takharu.'" (Murnane 1995, 241). Interestingly, the text does not even mention Akhenaten's name, only the name of his city, Akhet-Aten. Apparently, the Nineteenth Dynasty kings hated Akhenaten's city and all it represented just as much as the man who built it.

Lest anyone mistakenly believe the repudiation of Akhenaten and Amarna represented a passing fad, the pharaoh's reign was so tarnished in the minds of ancient Egyptians that when the 3rd century BCE Hellenized priest Manetho attempted to write a history of the period, it was extremely convoluted. Although part of the problem with Manetho's history is that only fragments recorded by later historians exist, there is little doubt that he had problems with the source material when attempting to chronicle the Amarna Period (Murnane 1995, 242). Fragment 50 reads, "Then his son Amenôphis for 30 years 10 months; then his son Ôrus for 36 years 5 months; then his daughter Acenchĕrês for 12 years 1 month; then her brother Rathôtis for 9 years; then his son Acenchêrês for 12 years 3 months, his son Acenchêrês II for 12 years 3 months, his son Harmaïs for 4 years 1 month." (Manetho 2004, Fr. 50)

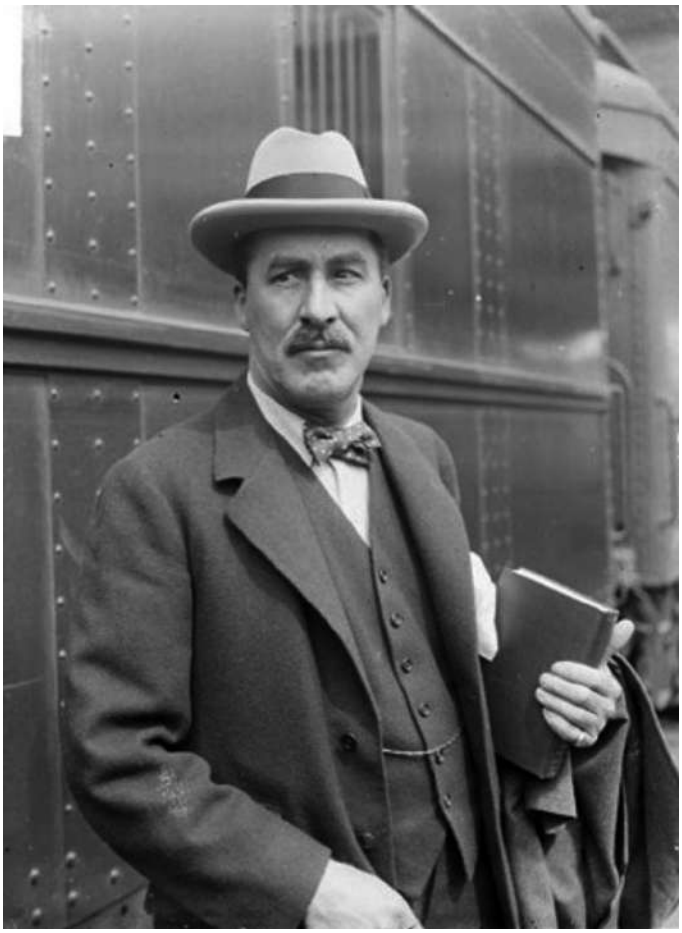
Outside of the first and last kings in the passage, it is difficult to say for sure who the kings are supposed to represent. Amenôphis is certainly Amunhotep III, and Harmaïs is more than likely Horemheb, which would

make Ôrus Akhenaten, but the others are questionable, especially when one considers there was no “II” to come to the throne between Akhenaten and Horemheb. Based on the lengths of the reigns Manetho listed, Murnane believed that Orus was actually Amunhotep III again, or Horemheb, In this interpretation, Akehnkheres was one of Akhenaten’s daughters, Rathotis was Tutankhamun, Akhenkheres was Akhenaten, Akenkheres II was Smenkhkare, and Harmais was Horemheb (Murnane 1995, 242). Whatever the order, it is clear that Egyptians wanted to forget the Amarna Period nearly 1,000 years after it had taken place.

Around the time Manetho was writing his history of Egypt, Greek and Roman “tourists” visited Amarna and left “graffiti” in the tombs. The term graffiti indicates a level of vandalism, but these visitors usually just left their names and a short inscription demonstrating that while they did not truly understand the historical importance of the site, they had a spiritual reverence for it. Early Christians also visited the Amarna tombs, but after the Muslim conquest, visits to Amarna would come to a complete end for centuries.

The Death and Burial of Tutankhamun

Howard Carter was born on May 9, 1874 in London, the son of the relatively successful artist Samuel John Carter. Howard inherited his father’s artistic talents, and it was this which eventually led him to a career in Egyptology. During his teens he became acquainted with the Egyptologist P.E. Newberry, and in the autumn of 1891, when he was only 17, Carter was hired to work as a copyist with Newberry at Beni Hassan and Deir el-Bersha in Egypt, making copies of inscriptions found on tomb and temple walls. Thus began Carter’s career in Egyptology.



Howard Carter

His work as a copyist quickly progressed, and from 1893-1899 he became responsible for copying the inscriptions and scenes found on the walls of the Queen Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri. Carter's career progressed even further when he was appointed Chief Inspector of Antiquities of the Upper Egypt region, which historically corresponds to everything south of the Nile delta, with Lower Egypt referring to the Delta region itself. The distinction is geographical rather than polar; southern Egypt (Upper Egypt) is of a higher elevation than Lower Egypt is. These designations were defined by the ancient Egyptians themselves and are still followed today by many historians. Occasionally one may find mention of a Middle Egypt region, a more modern construct used to simplify Egypt's regions. As its name implies, it refers to the middle area of Egypt, roughly outlining the area from Memphis down to Asyut. In 1904 Carter changed posts from that of Chief Inspector of Antiquities of Upper Egypt, to Chief Inspector of Lower Egypt, making him responsible for the archaeological sites in the Delta.

It was during his time as Chief Inspector for Lower Egypt that Carter became indirectly embroiled in the situation which would bring to a close his career with the Antiquities service, and which would in turn lead him to the employment of the Earl of Carnarvon. In 1904, an incident arose that involved a party of European visitors and the Antiquities Services' Egyptian employees. Carter's unwavering support for his Egyptian workers in a time when equality between classes and cultures was a rare occurrence was ill regarded by his contemporaries and resulted in him leaving the Antiquities Service a year later in 1905. From 1905-1909 Carter occupied his time with odd jobs offering his services as an artist to individuals or as a draftsman and copyist to other archaeologists.

It was in 1909 that Carter began his association and partnership with Lord Carnarvon. Carnarvon had first come to Egypt in 1905 for his health after he had been injured in a car accident, and he soon became enamored of Egyptian archaeology. He had wished to fund some excavations himself, but he was told by the Antiquities Service that he must work with an experienced archaeologist before they would give him leave to excavate. This made Carter a natural partner, since Carter was a skilled and knowledgeable excavator with both the time and the inclination to form a new partnership. The two men soon gained permission to excavate and began working at Asasif, located in the Theban necropolis. Although the pair were keen to work in the Valley of the Kings, they instead found themselves working at various other sites, some even as far off as the Delta, while waiting for permission to excavate in the Valley of the Kings. The American archaeologist Theodore M. Davis had already been granted permission to work in the Valley of the Kings, and it was not until he retired in 1914 that Carter and Carnarvon were finally granted rights to the Valley of the Kings.

It would be another 8 years before the pair made their discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those eight years of what they considered mediocre discoveries and false trails left Carnarvon frustrated and ready to give up the quest of finding a royal tomb. But Carter persevered and managed to convince Carnarvon to fund one last season, and thus the dig season of 1922-23 commenced. The traditional dig season for Egypt was from November to March, because Egypt's hot climate made it best to dig during the cooler months of winter.

Carter and Carnarvon's excavation that year began near the tomb of

Ramesses VI, a somewhat unusual location as it was in line with a water runoff. Such an area would have been filled with sand and rubble that had been dumped there from the rain water running down the mountain side. As it turned out, Carter chose just the right spot. On November 4, 1922, only a few days into the season, what looked to be the entrance to an as yet unknown tomb was discovered. This initial indication of a tomb was nothing more than a step cut into the bedrock of the valley floor. The next day further digging revealed a staircase that led down to a blocked doorway. The stones blocking the doorway were plastered over with mud and covered in seal impressions bearing marks of the necropolis, though at the time no royal name could be discerned. Lord Carnarvon was away in England at the time of the discovery, so Carter re-filled the stairway with rubble and sent a telegram to Carnarvon notifying him of the discovery: “At last made wonderful discovery in Valley; a magnificent tomb with seals intact; recovered same for your arrival; congratulations.” With that, Carter awaited his return.

Peter J. Bubenik’s picture of the site of Tutankhamun’s tomb

Carter also contacted a friend and colleague, Arthur Callender, to help with the excavation on the tomb. Upon the return of Lord Carnarvon to Gurna, the housing quarters of Carter and some of his team, the team started working

again on November 23, with Callender clearing the stairway in one day. That revealed more seals upon the entrance of the tomb, including one bearing the cartouche of Tutankhamun. Exciting as this discovery was, it was soon hampered by the realization that the tomb doorway had been re-opened and closed again at some point in the ancient past, usually a strong indication that a tomb had been robbed in antiquity. Nonetheless, the discovery of what would prove to be a new royal tomb was truly exciting.

Once the stone covering the doorway had been removed, a descending corridor filled with rubble was revealed and soon cleared. It took two days to do this, and on the afternoon of Sunday, November 26, a second sealed doorway was found. As with the first doorway, it too was covered with seals bearing the cartouche of Tutankhamun. Due to their excitement over this discovery, the group decided to make a small opening in the top left corner of the doorway, and they then inserted a candle through the opening of the tomb to reveal what was inside. In Carter's own words, taken from his journal, this is what he saw:

> 'It was sometime before one could see, the hot air escaping caused the candle to flicker, but as soon as one's eyes became accustomed to the glimmer of light the interior of the chamber gradually loomed before one, with its strange and wonderful medley of extraordinary and beautiful objects heaped upon one another.
>
> There was naturally short suspense for those present who could not see, when Lord Carnarvon said to me 'Can you see anything. I replied to him 'Yes, it is wonderful'. I then with precaution made the hole sufficiently large for both of us to see. With the light of an electric torch as well as an additional candle we looked in. Our sensations and astonishment are difficult to describe as the better light revealed to us the marvellous collection of treasures: two strange ebony-black effigies of a King, gold sandalled, bearing staff and mace, loomed out from the cloak of darkness; gilded couches in strange forms, lion-headed, Hathor-headed, and beast infernal; exquisitely painted, inlaid and ornamental caskets; flowers; alabaster vases, some beautifully executed of lotus and papyrus device; strange black shrines with a gilded monster snake appearing from within; quite ordinary looking white chests; finely carved chairs; a golden inlaid throne; a heap of large curious white oviform boxes; beneath

our very eyes, on the threshold, a lovely lotiform wishing-cup in translucent alabaster; stools of all shapes and design, of both common and rare materials; and lastly a confusion of overturned parts of chariots glinting with gold, peering from amongst which was a manikin. The first impression of which suggested the property-room of an opera of a vanished civilization. Our sensations were bewildering and full of strange emotion."

A pectoral belonging to Tutankhamun, representing his Prenomen

Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon had just made the archaeological find of the century, and one that has yet to be surpassed by any other Egyptologists. Excavation would continue to be carried out by an expert team of photographers, draftsmen, conservationists and so forth, in a detailed and meticulous manner: Arthur Callender, engineer; Arthur Mace, archaeologist, curator and conservationist; Harry Burton, archaeologist and photographer; Alfred Lucas, chemist, conservationist; Sir Alan Gardiner, Egyptologist and philologist; James Henry Breasted, Egyptologist; Percy Newberry, Egyptologist and botanist; Essie Newberry, conservationist; Douglas Derry, anatomist (and the first to examine the body of Tutankhamun); Lindsey Hall, draughtsman; Walter Hauser, archaeologist and architect. These men and

women were just a few of those who worked on uncovering the secrets of Tutankhamun and his tomb, not to mention the many Egyptian workmen, and their Reis Ahmed, and Hussein Abou Omar. The death of Lord Carnarvon on April 5, 1923 neither paused nor halted the recoding and removal of the objects found in Tutankhamun's tomb.

The Anubis figure which guarded the entrance to Tutankhamun's treasury room

Oddly enough, Lord Carnarvon's death touched off one of the pop culture phenomena most associated with Tutankhamun. Over the centuries, Egyptian society suggested that there was a tomb curse or "curse of the pharaohs" that ensured anyone who disturbed their tombs, including thieves and archaeologists, would suffer bad luck or even death. Naturally, there were warnings inscribed on the tombs of many buried ancient Egyptians, made in an effort to deter grave robbers. One inscription dating back to the 3rd millennium B.C. tomb of Khentika Ikhekhi reads, "As for all men who shall enter this my tomb... impure... there will be judgment... an end shall be made for him... I shall seize his neck like a bird... I shall cast the fear of myself into him".

When the deaths of archaeologists were used to support the notion of a curse of the pharaohs, supernatural and scientific explanations were put forth as an answer. Carnarvon had the misfortune of being bit by a mosquito and then suffering blood poisoning after cutting it open with a razor while shaving. Other strange stories were reported in conjunction with the opening of the tomb. Howard Carter always played down suggestions of a curse, but in 1926 he did consider it strange that he saw jackals of the same kind as Anubis, which guarded the entrance to the treasury room. It was the first time he'd seen that kind of jackal during his career, which by then spanned over three and a half decades.

Coincidences aside, of the nearly 60 people who worked in Tutankhamun's tomb, less than 15% of them died within a dozen years. Most went on to live normal, healthy lives.

Tutankhamun’s mummy stripped of everything

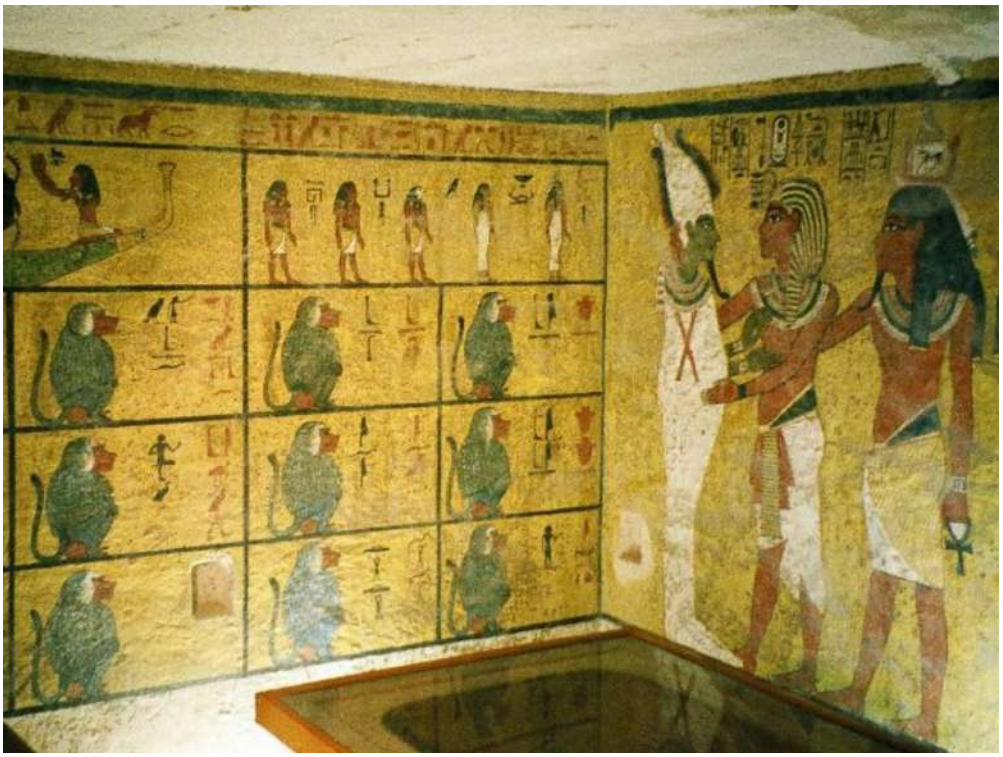
Due not only to their discovery but their efforts in conserving the objects found, Tutankhamun and his funerary possessions have inflamed the interests and imaginations of generations. However, as is often the case with discoveries of this kind, the tomb of Tutankhamun raised more questions than it did answers.

Ever since it was discovered that the mummy of Tutankhamun was that of an adolescent, the cause of his demise has been shrouded in mystery. What caused an 18 or 19-year-old boy to die, especially when that boy had been raised in a royal court with the best foods, education, and doctors available to him? It was postulated by some that he was murdered as part of some sort of political coup. Others thought he must have been sickly and died as the result

of some genetic disease or deformity.

For decades, very little light could be shed upon the cause of his death. However, with the advent of modern medical technology it recently became possible to subject his mummy to a number of scans, including CT scans, and DNA analysis. CT scans showed that not long before he had died, he had suffered a severe break in his leg, followed by an infection. This evidence, coupled with the presence of malaria in his system (revealed by the DNA scans), combine to give a very plausible cause of death. It is very likely that Tutankhamun died of illness that was the result of the infection in his leg and malaria. Such illness would have easily brought about an unexpected and sudden death, and the very nature of Tutankhamun's tomb and burial support the notion that his death had been unexpected.

The tomb of Tutankhamun, KV62, is very small, especially by New Kingdom royal tomb standards. It consists of a sloping corridor that leads down to four small rooms or chambers. The plan of the tomb is very different from that of earlier Eighteenth Dynasty rulers; indeed, its small size, cramped rooms, and unusual design imply that it had originally been intended for use by a nobleman, not the king. With Tutankhamun's unexpected death, he was probably placed into the smaller tomb because his own was not completed or ready to receive a burial. The decoration found on the walls of the tomb was most likely painted on between the time of his death and burial. Though abbreviated, the decoration was still of a very traditional nature, and the condensed scenes would have been due to the lack of appropriate space. These scenes depict portions of the progress of Ra through the heavens, and through the underworld, a clear statement declaring the return to the traditional religious practices. There are also scenes of the king being depicted alongside a variety of deities, along with a scene showing the "opening of the mouth" ceremony being performed by one of Tutankhamun's advisors, and soon to be successor Ay. Despite the return to more traditional burial practices, there were still vestiges of the Amarna period to be found. Some of the figures of the king and of the deities retained the same canonical proportions seen during the Amarna period. It is unlikely that this was meant to make any deliberate statement concerning his lineage or religious preference, but that it was instead the result of multiple artists being used to decorate the tomb.



Tomb of Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings

Many of the objects that were discovered in Tutankhamun's tomb were clearly made specifically for him and his burial, such as the coffins, funerary masks, canopic equipment and statues. Other objects, such as the furniture, clothing, and chariots, were obviously items that had been used during Tutankhamun's lifetime. The motifs found upon many of his possessions depicted him in triumph over his enemies. For example, a painted wooden chest bears a fine example of such a scene; the king is shown in his chariot, followed by his troops, attacking a group of Nubians. Scenes depicting aggression and triumph over Egypt's enemies by Egypt's king are classical examples of Egyptian kingship.

A golden shrine found in the tomb

It is important to remember that there was much more to the objects found in Tutankhamun's tomb than just affirming his position as Egypt's ruler. All the 5,398 objects recovered from his tomb had a purpose and a role to play in helping Tutankhamun on his journey into and through the afterlife. While we may never know the exact purpose of every single object, we do know that there would have been a purpose, and the majority of the objects can roughly be divided into a few main groups.

First, there are objects meant to protect and preserve the king's body so that his soul would be able to recognize it and return to it while traversing the afterlife. Preservation of the body was essential to Egyptian burial practices and to their beliefs concerning life after death. Tutankhamun's body was preserved through the process of mummification, a 70-day long process during which the vital organs are removed from the body and wrapped and sealed separately in canopic jars. The brain is removed and discarded, the body is then dried out using a substance called natron, and then it is carefully wrapped in linen. During the mummification process specific spells and enchantments would have been said over the body, and amulets were placed upon the body, with the intent of protecting it.

After the mummification process had been completed, the body would be

placed in its coffin or sarcophagus. Then the “opening of the mouth” ceremony, which is where the mouth of the deceased is opened up and his “breath released”, would be performed. This was part of the preparation needed to prepare the body and soul of the deceased for the afterlife.

The bandages used to wrap the body, the coffins, funeral masks, amulets, finger and toe stalls, canopic jars and box are all objects that were meant to help protect the body of the king. Objects such as these were mostly found in the burial chamber itself, but some were found in the treasury.

The next category of objects consists of those that were intended to help Tutankhamun in the afterlife, to keep him safe and to help maintain his identity. With the increasing importance that was placed upon the god Osiris, one’s afterlife became centered on the journey through the underworld. The king would have followed the sun god on his path through the underworld at night and be reborn with him in the morning with the sun rise. Many of the objects found in Tutankhamun’s tomb were intended to safeguard him on the journey through the underworld. Objects such as magical figurines, amulets, images of deities, and even the paintings on the wall were there to help the king in the afterlife, while other objects such as crocks and flails were symbols of Tutankhamun’s status. The king needed to retain his royal status in the afterlife. The crock and the flail were ancient symbols of Egyptian kingship, as were the serpent and vulture headed uraei on his funerary mask and the depiction of him standing triumphant over the enemies of Egypt. All of these were representations of Tutankhamun’s status as a king of Egypt.

The last category to be considered is that of daily life. Thousands of the objects found in the tomb, ranging from the piles of food, clothing, furniture, chariots, and weapons were reminders of the life Tutankhamun had lived, and they were placed there so that he might carry them with him into his afterlife. Some of the objects were symbols of what he had in life, such as that of the shabti figurines, which were made to look like people. These figurines, with some of them performing certain tasks and others standing still, were meant to represent the servants that Tutankhamun had possessed in life and the continued service and help that they would offer him in the afterlife. The food was meant to be a reminder of what he had eaten in life and to provide nourishment in the afterlife.

Although most of the objects have a clearly identifiable purpose, that of

preservation, protection, or representation, others do not. For example, there are three large ornate couches that are something of a curiosity. It has been determined that they were custom made for the king's burial, so they were not objects that had previously been used while he was alive. While they must have been intended in some way to be of use to the king in his afterlife, their specific purpose is not known. If they had been meant to represent objects the king had used during his life, why were these purposely built for his afterlife as opposed to placing couches he had used in life in the tomb?

Regardless of the purposes and mysteries of the objects, the scope, detail, and craftsmanship of the thousands of objects in Tutankhamun's tomb are magnificent, and the discovery of the relatively unspoiled tomb was and is every archaeologist's dream. But what did the tomb and its objects actually provide that was not already known? The tomb itself was small, and architectural and artistically it was and is a poor example of New Kingdom royal tombs. It offered no new information except to imply that the king buried within it must have died unexpectedly and before his own tomb had been completed. The objects found within the tomb, while amazing, held very little historical value. From many other tomb drawings, painting, and artifacts, Egyptologist already had a firm understanding of what everyday life was like in ancient Egypt, as well as knowledge of the religious practices and the burial practices. The tomb and its objects provided very little information concerning the life of Tutankhamun. In essence, all they really provided was a confirmation of the identity of the mummy.

What then can be taken from one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the 20th century? Historians now have physical examples of objects they had previously only seen depicted in drawings and paintings upon tomb and temple walls. They also possess the artifacts themselves and can determine how they were crafted and what materials were used. Of course, these are all relatively inconsequential compared to the legacy that Tutankhamun and his tomb left. After all, the tomb's objects and discovery fueled great interest in ancient Egypt unlike anything else ever has. It has affected pop culture, the film industry, tourism, literature, and so much more. The little-known king of the Eighteenth Dynasty is now one of the most popular figures from Egypt's history.

Perhaps one day scholars and archaeologist will be able to shed more light onto the life of Tutankhamun, but until then everyone's imagination can

continue to revel in the possibilities and the splendor of the glorious objects he left behind.

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